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# CIVILIZATION

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AN ESSAY

BY

CLIVE BELL

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## *DEDICATION TO VIRGINIA WOOLF*

*Dearest Virginia,*

*If I do this essay the honour of dedication to you, it is not only, nor chiefly, because by the spell of your name I might hope to charm my readers. Not that I should be ashamed to owe that or any other benefit to our friendship; but in truth my motive happens to be more honourable and more interesting. It is that you alone of my friends were in at the birth and have followed the fortunes of this backward and ill-starred child. You alone know that it was the first conceived of all my brood, and that all the rest (except some collections of articles) have, in a sense, come out of it. Its conception dates from our nonage. You remember, Virginia, we were mostly socialists in those days. We were concerned for the fate of humanity. And from that concern sprang first the idea, then the rough draft, of what was to be, of course, my* magnum opus, *a book to deal with nothing less than every significant aspect of our age, a book to be called* The New Renaissance.

*'It was a childish phantasy,' as I imagine Hood says somewhere; but childish as I was I realized even then that to explain where we were it would be necessary to demonstrate whence we had come.* The New Renaissance *was to have given a picture of contemporary art, thought, and social organization by tracing the history of those manifestations of civility from earliest times to the present—to* 1909 *say. But by* 1911 *I was a little wiser—a little more grown-up at any rate—and I perceived that my subject was unmanageable. Wherefore, inspired by the first and second Post-Impressionist Exhibitions, I cut out of my* New Renaissance *a section and published it in the spring of* 1914 *under the simple and comprehensive title* Art.

*Then came the war. And the war, with its political and economic consequences has, as you will soon perceive, modified my ideas considerably. Indeed the difference between this essay and the book about which I used to chatter in your workroom in Fitzroy Square is to be attributed mainly to that differentiating event. For, though the comedy—the spectacle, I mean, of millions of men and women trying by means of political and social organization to get what they more or less believe they want, and calling what they believe they want good—remains, the illumination is new. By the autumn of* 1918 *I had begun to see things differently; my opinions and beliefs had changed.*

*The things that had seemed valuable as ends seemed so still, but much of what I had taken for possible means to those ends seemed nonsense. I saw the old problem anew; and, for a moment, my vision appeared sharp and perhaps interesting. So that autumn I pulled out the dirty manuscript and began to re-write.*

*Fate still was waiting for me, for it rather. Early in* 1919 *I found myself, through no fault of my own, a professional art-critic and an almost professional* homme d'esprit. *Again the* opus *was abandoned. Only I extracted from it another chapter, published under the title* 'On British Freedom,' *which made a short, and in my opinion admirable, tract, which no one marked. And yet I would still be talking; which is why I have carried to this quietude the* 1918 *manuscript and from it extracted an essay on civilization.*

*You shall hear no more of* The New Renaissance. *What remained of the manuscript after this had been extracted fed, some months ago, the central heater. Here is the gist of the old familiar argument, modified by the war, and I think by nothing else. For since the war, the Russian revolution and the Italian* coup d'état, *nothing has happened, and I have read nothing, seriously to alter my conception of civilization or of the means by which it might be attained. Here are the paralipomena of my better thoughts and days, gathered*

*together, unified I hope, well bound and printed certainly, and laid at your feet, dearest Virginia, by your affectionate friend,*

*CLIVE BELL.*

CASSIS, *April* 1927.

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# I

## INTRODUCTION

SINCE from August 1914 to November 1918 Great Britain and her Allies were fighting for civilization it cannot, I suppose, be impertinent to enquire what precisely civilization may be. 'Liberty' and 'Justice' have always been reckoned expensive words, but that 'Civilization' could cost as much as I forget how many millions a day came as a surprise to many thoughtful tax-payers. The story of this word's rise to the highest place amongst British war aims is so curious that, even were it less relevant, I should be tempted to tell it; and in fact only by telling can I explain how this essay took final shape.

'You are fighting for civilization,' cried the wisest and best of those leaders who led us into war, and the very soldiers took up the cry, 'Join up, for civilization's sake.' Startled by this sudden enthusiasm for an abstraction in which till then politicians and recruiting-sergeants had manifested little or

no interest, I, in my turn, began to cry : 'And what is civilization ?' I did not cry aloud, be sure : at that time, for crying things of that sort aloud, one was sent to prison. But now that it is no longer criminal, nor unpatriotic even, to ask questions, I intend to enquire what this thing is for which we fought and for which we pay. I propose to investigate the nature of our leading war-aim. Whether my search will end in discovery and—if it does—whether what is discovered will bear any likeness to the Treaty of Versailles remains to be seen.

If I remember right, England entered the war because Germany had violated a treaty, it being held that a European war was preferable to an unavenged injustice—*fiat justitia, ruat caelum*, let justice be done though it bring the house down. The unqualified acceptance of this formidable doctrine may well have aroused in reflective minds a sense of insecurity, which sense may have induced those publicists and politicians who had to justify to chapel-goers and liberal newspaper-readers our declaration of war to back the moral with a religious motive. Whatever the cause, that was what happened. Someone, possibly Mr. Lloyd George himself, more probably Mr. Horatio Bottomley,

struck out the daring figure—'The Cross versus Krupps.' And as from the first the newspapers had welcomed the war as Armageddon, it stood to reason that Kaiser Wilhelm II. was Antichrist. Positively there was something Neronic about him, an alleged taste for music maybe. Besides there were prophecies, signs, and portents in the sky, and the angels pullulating at Mons, all which tended to prove that God was for us and very likely that we were against the devil. And yet, remembering His Imperial Majesty's engaging habit of pressing into the hands of young ladies a little book called *Talks with Jesus*, some of us found the identification unconvincing. Was it quite courteous either to insist on the dogmatic issue, when the French republic was officially agnostic and the Mikado of the Shinto persuasion? And was it prudent to involve the God of the Christians too deeply in a quarrel where French infidels, Japanese miscreants, Moslems and Parsees from India, and cannibals from Senegal, were banded against that pillar of the Catholic Church, the late Emperor of Austria? So, just when we were beginning to wonder whether the war could be exactly described as a crusade, some cautious and cultivated

person, a writer in *The Times Literary Supplement* I surmise, discovered that what the Allies were really up against was Nietzsche.

That discovery was, at first, a great success. Nietzsche was a butt for the high outrageous mettle of every one of us. That he was a German and a poet sufficed to put him wrong with the ruling class ; and since he was said to have despised mediocrity the middle and lower had some grounds for disliking him. Down with Nietzsche ! Ah, that was fun, drubbing the nasty blackguard, the man who presumed to sneer at liberals without admiring liberal-unionists. He was an epileptic, it seemed, a scrofulous fellow, and no gentleman. We told the working men about him, we told them about his being the prophet of German imperialism, the poet of Prussia and the lickspittle of the Junkers. And were anyone who had compromised himself by dabbling in German literature so unpatriotic as to call our scholarship in question, we called him a traitor and shut him up. Those were the days, the best of 1914, when France and England were defending Paris against Nietzsche and the Russian steam-roller was catching him in the back.

And yet this holding of the fort against

Nietzsche was not wholly satisfying either. For one thing it seemed depressing to be on the defensive everywhere. For another Nietzsche was so difficult to pronounce ; and besides it seemed odd to be fighting against someone of whose existence, six months earlier, not one in ten thousand had heard. We wanted not merely to be fighting against things ; something we wanted to be fighting for. For what ? Belgium seemed too small, not to say grubby, Christianity indiscreet, the balance of power old-fashioned, ourselves improbable. We longed for a resonant, elevating and yet familiar objective ; something which Christians and Agnostics, Liberals, Conservatives and Socialists, those who had always liked war and those who on principle detested it, those who doted on Marie Corelli and those who thought better of Mr. Wells, those who loved whisky and those who preferred Lady Astor, those, in a word, who took their opinions from *The Daily News* and those who took them from *The Daily Express* could all feel proud and pleased to make other people die for. And then it was that to some more comprehensive mind, to someone enjoying a sense of history and his own importance, to the Prime Minister or Professor Gilbert

Murray I dare say, came the fine and final revelation that what we were fighting for was Civilization : and then to me this urgent query—' And what is this civilization for which we fight ? '

An exact definition I do not hope to give : already I have outgrown that glorious certainty which enabled me in sixty thousand words to tell the world precisely what was art. Yet, as a British general might have stuck the butt end of his cane into a map of France, observing bluffly—' Your objective must be somewhere hereabouts,' so I, perhaps, can make a smudge on the chart of general ideas and say—' Civilization lies about there.'

To begin with what is dull and obvious, it seems reasonable to suppose that civilization is good. Were it not we should hardly have been expected to pay so much for it. And if good, it must be good either as an end or as a means. Now, unless when we speak of ' a highly civilized society ' we mean the Ideal or Absolute Perfection or Heaven civilization is not the end ; and the fact that we do commonly speak of the defects and vices of civilization seems to show that to most of us it is no more than a means.

Heaven transcends civility : and a society might be perfectly civilized and yet fall short of the ideal. From which it follows that what I am going to describe, or attempt to describe, is not absolute good but a particular means to good. To estimate its value will be my business later. For the present, we need agree only that, since civilization is good, and since good states of mind are generally allowed alone to be good as ends, civilization is presumably a means to good states of mind : which is of course another reason for rejoicing that those who were fighting for it were those who won the war.

To say that civilization is a means to good is not, be it noted, the same as saying that it is the only means. This I feel bound to mention because of late the opinion has gained ground that unless a means to good be the sole means, it is not a means at all. It is thus that science has fallen into disfavour with a school of thinkers, or perhaps I should say writers, for no better reason than that, in the opinion of these and indeed of most people, a world in which there was nothing but science would be deficient in passion and beauty. The notion that passion and beauty and science may all be good is, I

know not why, abhorrent to the romantic neo-Mumbo Jumbo mind both here and abroad. Certainly civilization is not the only means to good. Life, since it is a necessary means to states of mind of any sort, is a means to good : sun and rain, because they are means to life, are means to good also. Certainly, life, sun, and rain are also means to civilization, since without them civilization could not come into being ; but they are not the same as civilization, neither are they means to good only in so far as they are means to civilization. In fact, life, sun, rain, bread, wine, beauty, science and civilization are all means to good ; and the thing to bear in mind is, that while beauty is a direct means to good, and civilization a mediate, sun, rain and life itself are remote, though essential, means.

I should not have wasted ink and paper on this proposition had I not foreseen that it would lead to another, identical as it happens, yet by the very people who have accepted it in its first and more obvious form sometimes overlooked, especially when they are urging us to do this or that in the interests of civilization : not being the *only* means to good, civilization can not be *any* means to good. Of course, if civilization

were the only means to good, it would follow that anything which made for good was a part of civilization. But as civilization is not, it behoves us to pick and choose correctly. In suitable hands, and at the right moment, gin and the Bible are means to good undoubtedly ; yet it is a question how far European traders and missionaries are justified in calling what they carry into savage countries civilization. Irrational and uncompromising belief, blind patriotism and loyalty, have often been means to sublime states of mind, to good therefore ; but they are not civilization, and to civilization more often than not have proved inimical. Civilization is a particular means to good : and we must be careful not to assume that anything we like or respect is a part of it. We must not assume that it contains all our favourite virtues. We may vastly prefer eating a slice of roast mutton to studying metaphysics ; yet it would be rash on that account only to take it for granted that the first was the more civilized of these two admirable occupations. Civilization, which is not the only means to good, which is not any means to good, is a particular means which, on the authority of allied statesmen, and on grounds in my opinion more solid,

we may take to be immensely important. Even so we are far from discovering what it is.

The past participle 'civilized' (Lat. adj. *civilis*), as those who devoted their best years to the study of these things have the advantage of knowing, is correctly as well as commonly predicated of a state or society (*civitas*). Till the middle of the eighteenth century a Frenchman for '*civilisé*' would have written '*policé*,' and πόλις, you know, means city. When we speak of a civilized age we mean that the society which flourished in that age was civilized. Most commonly and most correctly 'civilization' or 'civility' is attributed to an organized agglomeration of human beings. Less commonly, and rather less correctly, is it predicated of persons—citizens (*cives*). But even a mind unsharpened on the whetstone of gerunds and verbs in μι will guess that in fact civilization must be the product of civilized individuals, and that any attempt to understand the nature of the thing or account for its existence leads inevitably and directly to human beings who create and maintain it. Further, unaided common sense will tell us that about individuals we have a chance of making statements more profitable and more

probable far than any we can hope to make about an entity so vague and multifarious as a state or society. There is some getting at a man : you can say something fairly definite about the desires and idiosyncrasies of John Smith or Wei Sing ; but what for certain can be said about those of Great Britain or China ? When we talk of ' China's honour ' or ' England's interests,' it is impossible we should mean anything precise, and unlikely that we mean anything at all. Not all the inhabitants of the British Isles have the same interests, neither have all Chinamen the same feelings. But we might be able to name with confidence the ruling passion of a particular Chinaman and trace with assurance a line of conduct that would be favourable to Smith. Had England refrained from declaring war on Germany England, as everyone knows, could never again have held up her head, but I dare say Smith would have kept his nose in the air.

This being so, you might expect me to begin my enquiry into the nature of civilization by attempting to discover what constitutes a civilized man. That would be the logical order ; I am debarred from following it by a fact. The fact is that whereas it is pretty generally agreed that certain societies

have been civilized, and even highly civilized, there is no such consensus of opinion about persons. My grand object being to discover what civilization is, my first endeavour should be to discover characteristics peculiar to admittedly civilized entities. If before examining the entity 'civilized individual' I examine 'the civilized society,' that will be because of the latter we have universally recognized types.

I shall begin with neither. I shall begin with entities universally reckoned uncivilized ; for by doing justice to the characteristics of these I ought to arrive at certain negative conclusions of fundamental importance. I shall know what civilization is not. No characteristic of a barbarous society can possibly be a peculiarity of civilized societies. It cannot be one of those distinguishing characteristics, of those characteristics for which I am looking, which differentiate civility from barbarism. It cannot be of the essence of civility. Not until I have discovered what civilization is not, shall I attempt by seeking its essence in universally accepted types to discover what it is. When in those types I have found—if I can find—common characteristics, not to be found in barbarous societies, I shall

have done the first part of my job. I shall have discovered the distinguishing characteristics of civilization.

I am going to elaborate a theory. That theory, if I am to take my readers with me, must be based on assumptions which seem to them fair. I must, that is to say, deduce the peculiar characteristics of civilization from a consideration of entities admittedly civilized and admittedly uncivilized. Now, as I have said, the only entities about the civility or barbarism of which there is a real consensus of opinion are societies : wherefore it is to societies, and not to individuals, that I must look for my distinguishing characteristics. These found, I can go on to consider their source which can be only in the minds of men and women. A group of these, as we shall see, is the veritable fountain. And if we are to push our speculations so far as to enquire whether by cultivating the cause one might hope to magnify the effect—whether, in fact, one might increase civilization—inevitably we shall find ourselves wondering by what means might be produced and maintained greater numbers of highly civilized people. But for the present I must go to societies for my characteristics ; for amongst societies alone are

to be found specimens unanimously voted savage and others generally reckoned civilized. Two or three, at any rate, there are the high civility of which is not contested by any reasonably well-educated person. These shall be my paragons : to those other three or four, which often are, or have been, reckoned ' highly civilized,' but of which the claims to that title are seriously and on solid grounds disputed I will not go.

Just as there are admittedly civilized societies, there are societies which all the world agrees to call barbarous. These you may admire ; you may like them—or think you like them—better than you like civilized societies ; but by consent so common are they reckoned savage that anthropologists go to them for some indication of the state of primitive man during those centuries or millenniums when he was ceasing to be a brute or at any rate passing from the palæolithic to the neolithic stage. These admirable anthropologists have made minute studies of the manners and beliefs of the most barbarous of these barbarous peoples ; and it is from their studies that I hope to learn at least what civilization is not. Remember, no characteristic, no matter how honourable, can, if possessed by savage communities,

possibly be a distinguishing characteristic of civility. Civilized societies may share such characteristics of course : they may possess them either as attributes common to humanity or as relics of barbarism. Also, these characteristics may be valuable and attractive, and far from being peculiar to savages may be possessed by many or most highly civilized people : but because they are not peculiar to civilized societies they will not help us to a definition. Though certain characteristics shared with savages were common to all civilized societies, they would not be distinctive ; and distinctive characteristics—peculiarities—are what we are looking for. We want characteristics which are common to all highly civilized societies and which savages are without. Only by disentangling these can we hope to learn what civilization is.

My first business, then, will be to clear the ground. I must eliminate those characteristics that might possibly be taken for tokens of civility were they not shared with the lowest and most undeveloped of savage tribes. To this end I must write a learned chapter, at the foot of whose pages some readers, justly suspicious of my erudition, will look for a forest of notes. They will

be disappointed. In so slight and superficial an essay copious footnotes would be out of place. A few there must be ; but a few only. For the mass of information in my next chapter I have gone to that classic work, Westermarck's *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*. Here the suspicious reader will find warrant for every fact adduced ; and here he will find, what is more, a masterly account of the faith and morals of savage peoples, based on monumental learning, supported by innumerable references, and illustrated by fascinating anecdotes. As for footnotes, my objection to them in light literature is, partly that they distract the eye, partly that too often they are a device for shirking the detestable labour of working hard lumps of raw matter into form. If the habit of reprinting articles is to be suffered these long adscititious footnotes must be suffered too. To journalism claiming immortality they are the inevitable complement. But in a light essay which purports to have been conceived as a whole from the first word to the last they are generally a sign of weakness and hardly to be tolerated. It is not that I dislike a show of erudition. On the contrary I am as conscious as another of the considerable dignity

conferred on the page by a judicious citation or an imposing name ; also the hopeful convert to my views shall not fail to be comforted and confirmed in his faith by meeting, in the text, with some fine ones. But only when I have to make one of those statements that jerk from an unfriendly reader the ejaculation—'liar,' shall I be at pains, by means of an asterisk, to guide the insult home.

Just now I tried to please this sort of reader by calling my essay slight and superficial. Slight, in every sense, assuredly it will be. Probably in the same way it will be superficial ; but when I used the word I was thinking chiefly of its most modern connotation. I meant that I was going to try to be intelligible. I sympathize with those writers who have been obliged by poverty or the exigences of military service to dispense with education, and I quite understand why they discountenance those whose object it has been to express ideas as simply, clearly, and briefly as possible. Such desperate methods would reduce the longest books of many of our best prophets to a very few pages ; for when there is no butter to spread you cannot even spread it thin. In such dearth the only thing to do is to dig

mysteriously into the loaf, which in literature is called being profound. And though there are readers who, having gone down to the bottom of the pit and there failed to discover the smallest speck of margarine, will venture to call such profundities empty, in the brisker parts of Europe and America the profound style is generally held in honour. In me, however, the airs of a mole or a miner would be mere affectation. Besides, unlike modern poetry and philosophy and philosophic fiction, an essay of this sort cannot hope to appeal to that great public which, in quest of life, brushes aside all hair-splitting distinctions between sense and nonsense. I dare not be profound. And frankly this essay would have been written with all the shallow lucidity of Montesquieu, Hume or Voltaire had the essayist known the secret of their superficiality.

Because I wish to be understood I shall try to be intelligible ; for the same reason I shall repeat myself. Long ago I might have learnt from the hoardings that to say the same thing over and over again is the way to convince ; but when I was younger, being rather silly about my fellow-creatures, I used to believe that to convey to them one's meaning one had only to state it clearly and

once. There was someone in Messrs. Chatto and Windus's publishing house as green as I, who, after reading the MS. of my first book, *Art*, hinted with great delicacy that on one point—the definition of a work of art—I had perhaps insisted excessively. So I had : as a private and exceptional human being 'the reader' was perfectly right, but as a publisher he was wrong. For the public I had not been repetitious enough ; and to this day able critics in England and America continue to assert that by 'a work of art' I mean precisely what I said so often I did not mean. Well, I have learnt my lesson. Wherefore, anyone who may notice that in this essay I say the same thing several times over, will be so kind I hope as to attribute the author's tediousness to a peculiarity of readers in general—a peculiarity, I need hardly say, not shared by the particular lady or gentleman who happens to be reading these words.

## II

## WHAT CIVILIZATION IS NOT

Respect for the rights of property is not peculiar to civilized societies. That the brutes have no such respect is true, neither have they flint implements ; savage human beings have both, which distinguishes them from the brutes but does not make them civilized. Flint implements and respect for the rights of property may be means to civilization : but no more than flint implements can a sense of those rights be considered a peculiarity of civilization. A contrary opinion has been held by many rich and thoughtful men ; but Westermarck tells us that numerous savage tribes have as nice a sense of mine and thine as any English magistrate. Theft would seem to have been almost unknown amongst North American Indians till the coming of the whites, who, in justice be it said, did their best to counteract any moral laxity they might have imported by sending missionaries to remind the natives that

eternal punishment awaits those who break the eighth commandment. It must not be supposed, however, that a belief in God and a future life is confined to the civilized—not here have we our first characteristic ; on the contrary, most savage races have a lively faith in God and many make a practice of eating him. The very lowest Australian bushfolk—the most barbarous perhaps of barbarous creatures—' believe in the existence of a supreme being who is a moral lawgiver and judge.' They even call him ' Father ' and worship him in the character of an elderly gentleman. Savages are rarely atheists : like us ' they entertain the larger hope.'

At public meetings I have heard ladies say that the measure of a people's civility is the position it accords to women ; as the one is high or low so will be the other. This, however, is not the case. From the Bushmen, Andaman Islanders, and Veddahs, than whom no men are much nearer brutes, says Westermarck, women get more consideration than they got from the Athenians in the time of Aristotle. While the uxorious, albeit cannibalistic, males of many savage tribes regard their wives as little less than equals, in those notoriously civilized

ages of Tang and Sung the Chinese seem to have regarded theirs as little better than live stock. Indeed, it is clear that many cannibals possess an infinitude of domestic virtues, being kindly, honest, and industrious, generous within their own tribe and hospitable to strangers ; whence it seems to follow that even the merits of the British proletariat are not peculiar to civilized societies. The truthfulness of savages has often astounded explorers. The Veddahs of Ceylon are said to be models of veracity, and both Andaman Islanders and Bushmen ' regard lying as a great sin.' On the other hand, the Greeks and Cretans, it will be remembered, had a poor reputation in this respect ; while on the continent of Europe the distinctive epithet reserved for Great Britain is ' perfidious.' Not only truthful, many savages are clean. The Megé, a miserable people of the Gold Coast, subject to the savage Monbuttu, ' wash two or three times a day ' and wash all over. I wonder how many Europeans from the end of the Roman Empire to the accession of Queen Victoria washed themselves all over once a year.

In the important matter of sexual morality the practice of many backward peoples may

well provoke our envy. Like Boswell they 'look with horror on adultery.' The forest tribes of Brazil, for instance, are inflexibly monogamous, and so are several of the tribes of California. It seems sad and rather strange that Professor Westermarck should yet have to describe these as 'a humble and lowly race . . . one of the lowest on earth.' 'The Kardok do not allow bigamy even to a chief; and though a man may own as many women for slaves as he can purchase he brings obloquy on himself if he cohabits with more than one.' It is as though a married man should go to bed with his cook. I am not quite sure what the professor means when he says that 'among the Veddahs and Andaman Islanders monogamy is as rigidly insisted upon as anywhere in Europe'; but, at any rate, the natives of Kar Nicobar are irreproachable. These respectable savages 'have but one wife and look upon unchastity as a very deadly sin.' With them as with many other savage tribes it is punished by banishment or death. 'It is noteworthy,' says Westermarck, 'that to this group of peoples (the group that feels quite nicely in these matters) 'belong savages of so low a type as the Veddahs of Ceylon, the Igorrotes of Luzon, and certain Australian

tribes.' It is noteworthy, he might have added, that whereas unchastity is regarded as a heinous crime by the most abject savages, in the most glorious ages of the world it has been regarded as a peccadillo at worst. Unlike the natives of Kar Nicobar, the most thoughtful and sensitive people in the most brilliant epochs of history have been blind to the horrid sinfulness of fornication. Plato advocated communism in women. Chastity was of small account in the circle of Alcibiades, the court of Hadrian, the Medici gardens, or the salons where Voltaire, Helvétius, and Diderot gave shape to a new intellectual order and preached the philosophy of pleasure. Socrates and Shakespeare, Raphael and Titian, Caesar and Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington and George Eliot herself appear to have led lives that would have rendered them unfit for the best Igorrotes society in Luzon. In the great periods of Chinese history things, I fear, were no better. So, as the natives of Kar Nicobar look upon unchastity as a very deadly sin, we are forced to conclude that chastity is not one of the distinguishing characteristics of civilization.

Let us not flatter ourselves by supposing that patriotism is a peculiarly civilized

virtue. The North American Indians are renowned for it, Carver going so far as to say of the Naudowessies—'the honour of their tribe, and the welfare of their nation, is the first and most predominant emotion of their hearts.' Of the Yorubas of West Africa Mr. MacGregor writes: 'No race of men could be more devoted to their country'; yet, unless I mistake, this tribe has been suspected of eating missionaries. 'Solomon Islanders not seldom die from homesickness on their way to the Fiji or Queensland plantations.' While, according to Mr. Williams, a Fijian, who, having visited the United States, began, at his chief's request, to enumerate the respects in which that country was superior to his own, was promptly put to silence by an indignant audience with cries of 'he is a prating, impudent fellow: kill him.' However it may be with chastity, it is clear that as pure a flame of patriotism burns in the Fiji Islands as in any part of Europe. And though few modern nations have much to learn from them, many famous peoples of old might have profited by their example. For instance, the Chinese, soon after the time of Confucius, were learning from their philosophers that we ought to love all men

equally : 'according to the Hindu work, Panchatantra, it is the thought of little-minded persons to consider whether a man is one of ourselves or an alien' : and Democritus of Abdera held that 'every country is accessible to a wise man, and that a good soul's fatherland is the whole earth.' The later Cyrenaics and Cynics denounced patriotism as ridiculous, and their doctrine developed into that benign Stoic cosmopolitanism which was the religion of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. 'Il est clair qu'un pays ne peut gagner (he is talking of war) sans qu'un autre perd, et qu'il ne peut vaincre sans faire des malheureux,' was the final judgment of Voltaire.

I think we must take it as settled that neither a sense of the rights of property, nor candour, nor cleanliness, nor belief in God, the future life and eternal justice, nor chivalry, nor chastity, nor patriotism even are amongst the distinguishing characteristics of civilization, which is, nevertheless, a means to good and a potent one. Obviously the essence of civilization is something to which savages have not attained ; wherefore it cannot consist in primitive virtues. The antithesis between the noble savage and the civilized man which has been current

these two hundred years implies a general recognition of the fact that civilization is not a natural product. We should expect it rather to have to do with those last acquisitions of humanity—self-consciousness and the critical spirit. We should expect it to be the result of education. Civilization is something artificial.

There lingers on, however, a school of thought, drawn chiefly from the half-educated and bumptious smattering a little science, according to which civilization consists in absolute submission to Nature's law.[1] 'Leave it to Nature' is their motto: the brute and vegetable kingdoms are the exemplars of civility. Men have made a mess of it, they say, by not allowing the fittest to survive: we shall not be truly civilized till we leave the weak to die and recognize formally that might is right. The fit shall inherit the earth. The question is, of course, who are the fit? If the physically inferior have succeeded in so organizing society that overwhelming policemen hold the muscular undergraduates of London

[1] My friend, Mr. Raymond Mortimer, who left Oxford not so very long ago, assures me that this school exists no more. He may be right: I hope he is. To be sure, when I wrote I was thinking of an older generation and of a state of mind prevalent five-and-twenty years ago.

University in awe, may it not be because the physically inferior are the mentally superior ? Cunning quite as much as guts, if we may trust the text-books, has done the work of evolution. After all, that puny mammal, man, has fared better in the struggle for existence than the majestic mammoth. And even amongst men, perhaps the fittest to survive have survived. It begins to look as if the naturalist's argument stultified itself. If the survival of the fittest be a law of nature we may assume that the fittest to survive do survive. If, as seems not improbable, war is to become the normal condition of humanity, the future will be with those crafty weaklings who adapt themselves to their circumstances by devising means of evading military service, just as in the glacial period those species survived which learnt to protect themselves from the sharpness of the climate. ' You have tampered with Nature's Law,' say the science students ; ' It is our nature to,' we reply.

All this, I fear, will strike the downright biologist as sophistic and vicious ; and if he realizes that he is getting the worst of the argument he will most likely fall back on morality. Few can take a higher moral tone than your half-baked man of science, who will

brand remorselessly as sloppy, shifty, dishonest, cowardly, mean, silly, sentimental and altogether pernicious those who believe we ought not to expose rickety children, strangle consumptive artists, or have our loves chosen for us by Professor Ray Lankester. 'We ought,' they exclaim indignantly: but here, again, are they not stultifying themselves? There is no 'ought' in Nature; only 'is.' When the biologist says that we ought not to tamper with Nature he introduces a non-naturalistic, an ethical, criterion. But if ethics are to be used as arguments in favour of Nature's law, with equal propriety they may be used as arguments against. We may say that it would offend our moral sense to murder babies and ailing poets and all those who cannot hope to attain the B1 standard of efficiency: such action, we may say, would not in our judgment make for good states of mind. 'Very well,' says the science student grimly, 'but be sure that if man refuses to obey the law of Nature man will perish.' 'And if,' we reply, 'the sole end and purpose of man's existence be but to continue his species, if the individual have no value save as a means to that end, does it matter?' That any given race of apes should become

extinct signifies not a straw ; and if man is to live for no other purpose than that for which apes live, his continued existence becomes equally unimportant. Once admit, however, that man exists for some other purpose than that of continuing his species and the whole Imperial Institute quivers to its foundations, since it may be precisely on account of those other purposes that we protect the weak and respect the individual.

The dilemma whose horns I have been furbishing for the benefit of the South Kensington science student is this : either, whatever is, is right ; or, man knows better than Nature. In the first case there can be nothing to grumble about ; in the latter the biologist must find better grounds for grumbling. The mastodon, having failed in his struggle for existence, goes out. Very well, some other species, carrying on the mastodon's mission, race preservation, takes his place. All is well. If the race of South Kensingtonians perish and one more biologically efficient take its place, where is the harm in that ? All is well ; Nature's purpose is served. Why should we put ourselves about to preserve the South Kensingtonians unless we believe that their purpose is different from and finer than that

of Nature? 'And why,' interjects the reader, 'should you be betrayed by irritation into long-windedness? Surely two sentences would have sufficed to convince anyone that by a civilized society we do not mean a species perfectly organized for its own preservation? What about the pismires?'

There remain one or two other things which it may be just worth pointing out that civilization is not. For instance, elaborate mechanical contrivances are not, as some have supposed, of its essence. It would be worse than stupid, it would be unpatriotic, to hold that Germany, just before the war, was more highly civilized than France, yet in the application of science to industry the Germans surpassed all nations, except perhaps the people of the United States. No one imagines that Melbourne is to-day as highly civilized as was Athens in the time of Pericles, and we may be sure that the last to make such a mistake would be the best educated inhabitants of that great, electric-lit, train-served, tram-ridden city. Many Frenchmen admit, unwillingly, that even Paris at the present day is less highly civilized than Periclean Athens; but not only all Frenchmen, all educated Americans too,

would agree that modern Paris is more highly civilized than New York. It is not denied, however, that in means of communication and transport, in sanitary arrangements and lighting, Paris is still behind the times.

Soon after the Russo-Japanese war I took to dine at a restaurant in Soho, where a dozen very young intellectuals were in the habit of meeting once a week, one of those charmingly modest British officers who have lived so long in a world where it is their duty to be stupid that they have quite forgotten how intelligent they are. We fell, I recollect, to discussing the subject of this essay—'What is civilization?' Fabianism was a good deal to the fore just then, and some of us were sure that no society could be described as civilized where provision was not made for paupers, invalids, and lunatics; others (ladies were of the party) felt that in a civilized community every adult would have a vote; others again that a truly civilized people would give every poet and artist five hundred a year and establish picture galleries in the provincial towns; others—but perhaps what the others said would not seem so interesting now as it did then. What my soldier said was this: 'I

can't tell you what civilization is, but I can tell you when a state is said to be civilized. People who understand these things assure me that for hundreds of years Japan has had an exquisite art and a considerable literature, but the newspapers never told us that Japan was highly civilized till she had fought and beaten a first-class European power.' The irony was well placed ; but the gallant captain himself would have been the last to maintain that proficiency in arms was really a test of civilization. I know he would have denied as strenuously as the merest milksop that the barbarians who overran the Roman empire were civilized, or that the Tartars who overthrew the Sung dynasty and in Central Asia ruined Mahometan culture were anything better than a pack of brutes. With a couple of instances I could have persuaded him. The philanthropists might have been confronted with those examples which just now confounded, or should have confounded, the people who measure civility by mechanical development. And, as for the person who held that a civilized society is one where every adult has a vote, he (or she) was talking manifest nonsense. Political institutions may, or may not, be means to civilization ; they cannot



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be of its essence. Many savage tribes are ruled by despotic chiefs, others appear to be democratic. Athens in her prime was an oligarchy of free citizens, supported by voteless slaves ; France, in the eighteenth century, an almost unlimited monarchy. Civilization, we may be sure, has to do with something more fundamental than forms of government.

I have now succeeded, to my own satisfaction, in showing that certain characteristics which are sometimes mistaken for peculiarities of civilization are, in fact, nothing of the sort. I have tried to eliminate the unessential. The primitive virtues are seen to be compatible with barbarism : jelly-fish conform to Nature's law : no particular type of political institutions is common to civilized or to barbarous societies : savage hordes have gained great victories and conquered powerful States : and—though here I was trespassing on ground that belongs to a later chapter—not all those societies which educated opinion universally recognizes as having been highly civilized have brought mechanical invention or philanthropic organization to a particularly high state of efficiency. It is these societies, universally recognized by educated

opinion as highly civilized, that in my next chapter I must scour for common and peculiar characteristics. Such characteristics I shall take to be the essentials of civilization. Anyone, therefore, who does not share the general, educated opinion as to the high civility of those societies will, since he denies my premises, see no necessity in my conclusions. For him this essay can have no more than an academic interest. I do assume, on the strength of a consensus of educated opinion which amounts almost to unanimity, the high civility of three different societies. I do not assume, nor dream of assuming, that they alone have been highly civilized. I have chosen the three about the high civility of which there appears to be no dispute, and about which I happen to know something. There are societies with strong claims to be considered highly civilized, against whose claims, however, strong arguments are often adduced. Clearly to them I ought not to go for characteristics. Others there are, of which the civility is taken for granted, but about which, it turns out on examination, we know so little that hardly any characteristics can with certainty be ascribed to them. Nevertheless, many people I feel sure will insist on adding to

my list, and them I will beg not to quarrel with my conclusions until they have seen whether the characteristics common to my three typical civilizations are not shared by those that they would add. Even if they find it necessary to amend by addition or subtraction my list of civilized characteristics, I see no reason why our difference should be considered fundamental. Between us there may still remain enough common ground to sustain my definition. We shall see.

# III

## THE PARAGONS

OLD-FASHIONED historians who had a pleasant tidy way of dealing with the past used to plot out from that wilderness four periods of high civilization : the Athenian (the Ionian we should say, if we were exact, which I have no intention of being), from the battle of Marathon, 480 B.C., to the death of Alexander, 323 ; the first and second centuries of the Roman empire ; Italy in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries ; and France from the end of the Fronde (1653) to the writer's own time if, like Voltaire, he was writing in the eighteenth century, to the Revolution if he was writing in the nineteenth. I suppose no educated man or woman alive would deny the high civility of three out of these four ; but many would demur at the name of Rome, while others would wish to add Tang and Sung and what is vaguely known, or rather talked of, as Persian civilization. First on the list almost all would agree to place the Athenian ; but whereas

some would limit this social masterpiece to that little span of sixty dazzling years which lies between 480 and 420 and is called the age of Pericles, others would protract it to Aristotle and Alexander and stretch it back to Solon. In my admiration for the sixth century, for its sculpture which I consider the supreme manifestation of the Greek plastic genius, for its intellectual ardour from which all serious modern thought descends, I yield to none : nevertheless I share the general disinclination to call the sixth century highly civilized, whereas unhesitatingly I bestow that title on the fifth and without much demur on the fourth. In this feeling, shared I believe by most educated people, lies an important implication : the civilization of an age, we feel, is not to be measured entirely by the beauty of its art or the splendour of its thought. We feel—I, at any rate, feel—that the era of high Athenian civility opens not before Marathon ; while, painfully aware though I am of the inferiority, not so much in particular genius as in general alertness, of the post-war period, I cannot admit that the epoch closes before the death of Aristotle (322). From Solon to the final repulse of the Persians seems to me,

and to most people I think, a great but not completely civilized age ; from the fall of the Athenian democracy to the conquests of Alexander a less great but more highly civilized. Be that as it may, no one is now likely to refuse whatever honour the title ' highly civilized ' may be supposed to confer to the age of Plato, the later Aristophanes, Praxiteles, and Aristotle. Few will deny that it is an essential part of that great Athenian civilization to which I shall return again and again, which, indeed, anyone who hopes to discover the nature of civilization must study profoundly and with an open mind.

The claim of any period in Roman history to a place amongst the great ages of civilization is certain to meet nowadays with fervent and effective opposition. No Roman period will be found amongst my paragons ; but were I to summarize here the arguments that have convinced me that none is admissible, clearly I should have to anticipate conclusions at which I hope presently to arrive. Since we have not yet decided what are the characteristics of civilization I cannot presume to say that Rome was without them. All I can do is to adumbrate the evidence which has led me to think poorly of the

Roman mind and sensibility: and, be it noted, not all of this need, nor indeed will, turn out to be valid against Rome's claim to high civility. It is the fact that her claim is seriously disputed by very many whose dissent is not to be disregarded that makes it improper for me to draw inferences from her history. I will not, however, be so disingenuous as to pretend that I do not share their unfavourable opinion. I will give my reasons, or some of them, at once; but why exactly I consider that Rome was never highly civilized will become apparent only in the course of my essay.

Voltaire held that it was in the first century of the empire that Roman culture reached high-water mark; but an admirer to-day would prefer to take his stand on the second, I fancy. The barbarism and brutality of the Republic became obvious to historians long ago—so obvious that sharp students began to grow suspicious of later ages. Having begun to wonder whether it was probable that the quality of life had been changed essentially by Caesar's adventure or Cato's *beau geste*, they soon discovered that under the earlier emperors Roman society remained much what it had been in the days of the Republic. For this reason

it is the second century, the years between the accession of Nerva and the death of Marcus Aurelius, which is now held by that melting minority which still believes in Roma Dea to have been an age of sweetness and light. A larger and younger school, in which I claim a modest place on the sizar's bench, holds that in all her political transformations Rome remained essentially brutal and uninteresting. In her literature, art, thought and general culture we find nothing of value which is not a dull echo of Greece. To us the vast majority of Latin writers seem never to have conceived of their language as a means of self-expression, but to have used it much as do sixth-form boys, making versions instead of expressing themselves. The bulk of Latin literature has unmistakably the air of an exercise. Roman writers, for the most part, aspired to produce books that should be like books ; the notion of writing to express one's own thoughts and feelings was unnatural to them. Wherefore, turning from Homer to Virgil, or from Sophocles to Seneca, is like turning from *Pilgrim's Progress* to a parish sermon. Homer and Sophocles wrote because they had something to say, Virgil and Seneca because it seemed right to say something. Except

Catullus and Lucretius what Latin authors have conveyed to us a sense of any real experience? One or two no doubt. Has a single Roman sculptor expressed anything at all? Not that I am aware of. Roman philosophy reminds one of an exceptionally high-toned debate in the House of Commons. The argument, as a rule, is fairly well conducted, but it never brings one within measurable distance of the heart of the matter, and philosophy which is not even trying to reach those parts is apt to be uninteresting. And if their philosophy (e.g. *De Amicitia*, or Seneca's *De Providentia*) reminds one of parliamentary debates, their private correspondence recalls the smoking-room conversation of Victorian senators. It is friendly, sensible, and urbane; never intimate, witty, or romantic. Though Tacitus had his epigrams and Juvenal his invective, of intimacy, wit, and romance the Romans, in general, knew nothing. They could talk reasonably about practical affairs, as reasonably as prefects at public schools. They had jokes, opinions, indignation, appetite. They respected, as does the better sort of English business man, those honourable and friendly obligations that bind man to man in offices and law-courts, in railway-

carriages and on the links. But never, never, did they get close to anything that matters ; and that is why the strong smell of Rome rolling across the ages reminds me at best of the House of Commons and political dinner-parties, at worst of petrol and patchouli, plush and new leather.

For anything I can see the Romans were incapable of passionate love, profound aesthetic emotion, subtle thought, charming conversation, or attractive vices. They had no sense of the reality of the world of thought and feeling. Such culture as they managed to get they got in the second century, and it was purely Greek : a handful of Greek writers and thinkers illustrate dimly that age. How little this thought leavened the Roman lump may be inferred from the fact that superstition was then so gross that, according to Renan, the better minds were drawn to Christianity chiefly on account of its comparative reasonableness. It was in the second century that Roman law, the greatest and most beneficent product of the empire, was given its familiar character—it was not codified, of course, till more than three hundred years later. Now Roman law, as we know it, is essentially Greek :

the eminent jurisconsults, who were Stoics to a man, modifying and developing along lines indicated by their philosophical doctrine the older Roman theories, substituting for the *jus reipublicae* the *jus gentium*. As for Roman taste : it is within the knowledge, as they say, of all tourists that Hadrian, one of the most refined and Hellenized of Roman rulers, built himself at Tivoli a villa which, in description, reminds one oddly of the worst escapades of modern millionaires. The good Gregorovius is agog ; '. . . this villa' (says he), 'built according to his (Hadrian's) own design, was the copy and reflexion of the most beautiful things which he had admired in the world. The names of buildings in Athens were given to special parts of the villa. The Lyceum, the Academy, the Prytaneum, the Poecile, even the vale of Tempe with the Peneus flowing through it, and indeed Elysium and Tartarus were all there. One part was consecrated to the wonders of the Nile and was called Canopus after the enchanting pleasure-grounds of the Alexandrians. . . . At a sign from the Emperor these groves, valleys, and halls would become alive with the mythology of Olympus ; processions of priests would make pilgrimages to Canopus, Tar-

tarus and Elysium would become peopled with shades from Homer, swarms of bacchantes might wander through the vale of Tempe, choruses of Euripides might be heard in the Greek theatre, and in sham fight the fleets would repeat the battle with Xerxes.' If only it had all gone by electricity it would have been perfect.

That the influence of Rome on the world was enormous no one would deny : nor should one deny that it was in many ways beneficent. That, however, does not prove that the Romans were highly civilized, seeing that as much could be said for the German barbarians who overran and ruined the empire. Just what we owe to Rome is still matter of dispute. But that many competent judges deny her claim to high civilization is unquestionable ; wherefore I could not, if I would, draw from her history acceptable data.

Between the death of Boccaccio (1375) and the sack of Rome (1527) the Italians are generally allowed to have attained to a very high pitch of civilization, with which allowance I assuredly find no fault. There are those who murmur against the political methods of the age ; and to them I would, in the first place, point out that we are not

yet sure that political morality is an essential feature of high civilization ; in the second, that political assassination may be a substitute for war, and that the murder of one is generally to be preferred to the murder of thousands. Certainly, amongst the intelligent and cultivated Italians of the Renaissance contempt for brute force was greater than it is amongst Italians to-day, a comparison which is not, I suppose, much to the purpose.

It cannot be denied that in the fifteenth century Italian writing of which a great part was in Latin suffered from precisely those faults we have deplored in Roman. Rather than a means of expression it is an act of culture, an erudite performance, bearing about the same relation to literature that reading family prayers does to religion. 'Il trecento diceva, il quattrocento chiacchierava,' say the cognoscenti. Not but what the fifteenth century had writers who meant it : Boiardo, Pulci, Sacchetti, and Lorenzo himself. For the visual arts of the Renaissance I presume no apology is required : but people easily forget the seriousness of that age's attempt to give science a foundation in fact. Physics, medicine, and anatomy were again studied

by Europeans, and, towards the end of our period, had been pushed almost to the point at which the Greeks left them : geometry and physics were picked up at that point and carried forward : while zoology and botany, I am given to understand, were once again taken seriously. To play the Renaissance off against the middle ages is to deal oneself too strong a hand. But if you have the courage to examine the philosophic syncretisms of the Medicean Platonists you will find that, silly as they are, they conceal beneath their mountainous quilts of metaphysical goose-down an infantile clutching at truth which distinguishes them from the lucubrations of Roman philosophers who merely restate familiar fallacies with the complacent and cumbrous air of one who discharges a moral obligation. Lucretius himself was not original, but he was exceptional. On the whole, it is true that the men and women of the Renaissance were concerned intensely with things that have a real existence in that high world of thought and feeling which we call spiritual, whereas almost all that was significant in Roman thought was concerned with the practical. Rare exceptions apart, the adventures of the Roman mind in the upper regions were

about as interesting as are the ecstasies of tourists in picture galleries.

It will be objected that the Renaissance was a superstitious age, addicted to astrology and nonsense of that sort, which is as true as that the scientific spirit was then wider awake than it had been in Europe since the fourth century B.C. Also, the best minds resisted. Already in the fourteenth century Petrarch had made an effective stand, and in the fifteenth Pico della Mirandola seems to have carried opinion with him in his famous attack on the mystery-mongers.[1] The novelists, their prince Franco Sacchetti in the van, poke fun at soothsayers and impostors ; and Giovanni Villani says, 'No constellation can subjugate either the free will of man, or the counsels of God.' 'How happy,' remarks Guicciardini, 'are the astrologers, who are believed if they tell one truth to a hundred lies, while other people lose all credit if they tell one lie to a hundred truths.' That in general the effect of the Renaissance was to provoke 'scepticism' is clear, the difficulty is to determine precisely to what this 'scepticism' amounted. The Inquisition called it 'atheism,' and stamped it out ruthlessly after

[1] *Adversus Astrologos*, lib. xii. See also Burckhardt.

1527, with the aid of the black Spaniards. If I might generalize from particular cases of which I know something (but which happen to be French) I should say that there were two brands of Renaissance scepticism : an airy Voltairianism not incompatible with a certain amount of mild superstition of which Bonaventure des Périers may serve as a specimen, and a rather dour uncompromising atheism, quite free from supernaturalism, though not from philanthropic superstitions, of which Étienne Dolet—a martyr to truth if ever there was one—stands as type. According to Calvin, Dolet ' méprisait ostensiblement l'Évangile,' and declared that ' la vie de l'âme ne differait en rien de celle des chiens et des pourceaux.' But, indeed, superstition and other vices notwithstanding, the claim of the Italian Renaissance to high civility is not seriously opposed ; and M. de Gobineau, than whom no one has better understood its intellectual life can put into the mouth of Lucrezia Borgia the following judgment, ' Il n'existe de grand dans ce monde que l'amour des arts, l'amour des choses de l'esprit, l'amour de ceux qu'on aime.' She is speaking for her age.

The other example of which I can make

use without much fear of contradiction is the civilization which flourished in France during *le grand siècle* and the eighteenth century. From 1660 to 1789 is an age less glorious than that of Pericles but hardly less renowned. It is the common opinion, and that it should be so is significant, that whereas the second half of the seventeenth century and early part of the eighteenth is the greater, the second half of the eighteenth (which ends in 1789) is the more civilized. So here again we have evidence that educated people distinguish between a great age and a civilized, or rather recognize that grandeur and civilization, though by no means incompatible, are not synonymous. What is more, though it is probable that during the first half of this period—from the Restoration to the death of George I.—England played as great a part in the world as France, though it is certain that her intellectual triumphs and literary output were at least equal to anything that was being done elsewhere, though her military achievements were prodigious, no one would dream of suggesting that England was at that time as highly civilized as her neighbour. And, in passing, may I record the irrelevant but I think not uninteresting fact, that, during

the first part of this period, when creatively and intellectually England was more than a match for her rival, England was not yet what France was still, a great imperial power. It was after the peace of Paris, in 1763, that France became intellectually paramount, though her empire had fallen into the hands of the English who had India and America to console them for the loss of Milton, Dryden, Congreve, Marvell, Prior, Pope, Swift, Newton, Boyle, Bentley, and Locke.

There are two or three periods, reputed highly civilized, about which European historians have said little because they know nothing. Under the Tang dynasty (*circa* 600-900 A.D.), and even more under the Sung (960-1279), it looks as though the Chinese had attained a state of exquisite refinement. But our knowledge of both is so meagre, so miserably bare of detail, that the attempt to deduce from either the peculiar characteristics of civilization is one on which only a half-educated journalist passing himself off as a historian would venture. We have Chinese art—paintings, sculpture, ceramics—and certainly it seems fair to assume that the men who created, and still more the men and women who appreciated, such things were in the highest

degree civilized : for Chinese art, and Sung art especially, is not only good but civilized —a distinction on which I shall soon have to dwell. We have Chinese poetry and some prose—in translations. But, for my part, I refuse to draw inferences from translations because no one can tell how much of himself a modern translator may not have worked, unconsciously, into an ancient text. The fact is, Chinese social and political history has been neglected by European scholars ; wherefore we, puzzled and misled by a completely unfamiliar temperament and point of view, cannot hope to gain from the scraps of information that come our way any clear idea of how a cultivated Chinese lady or gentleman of the Tang or Sung epoch would have thought or felt about the things that touch and interest us most. It is childish to suppose that from a few pots and pictures, poems, travellers' tales and records (these in translations too) we can conjure up a valid vision of his or her way of life and habits of mind. About the lives of citizens of Periclean Athens, about the Florentines of the Renaissance, and about eighteenth-century Parisians we know enough to be able, by an effort of imagination, to make ourselves a picture. We can even get a rough notion

of what our lives lived amongst them would have been. We can imagine our surroundings. We can conjecture, perhaps, how our friends would have spoken and behaved, and how we should have reacted to what they did and said. Such feats of fancy though difficult are not impossible. But to see himself, precisely and with conviction, drinking tea and conversing with a party of cultivated mandarins and their young ladies, about the year 1150, in the sacred city of Hangchow, is, I am persuaded, a feat beyond the fancy of any modern Occidental.

Similar considerations forbid me scouring Persia for instances. That there were one or two periods of high civilization in what is vaguely called Persia is possible and even probable; but to conjure up a definite vision of life at Ispahan, Rhages, or Bagdad (which is not in Persia by the way) is beyond the scope of my knowledge or the power of my fancy. Also, I have noticed that those to whom the task comes most easy have, as often as not, no sure opinion as to where and when the Persia of their dreams existed. The Abbasid empire at the height of its glory stretched from Bokhara to the Mediterranean and from the Caucasus to the extremity of Arabia. That this empire,

centering on Bagdad and ruled about the year 800 by Haroun al-Raschid, supported a considerable civilization is clear enough to all the gorgeous East school, and not less so perhaps to those precisians who distinguish it from a quite different civilization which flourished in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and was made illustrious by the school of Firdousi and by Omar Khayyám. And what do we know of either? There is a vast literature, some part of which has been translated: but, since the reputation of Persian poetry stands high with those who know the language, I assume that such translations as I have read are faithless to the text. In the eighteenth century the admirable Jones laid a foundation on which Persian history might have been built: but I can think of no modern writer on mediæval Persia who has succeeded in making the subject real to himself even; and I dare say one gets a better idea of how things were in the tenth and eleventh centuries at Bagdad or Ispahan from M. Dozy's *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* than from any modern book that purports to treat of Asia. There was a great art? Yes; but unluckily it is the product of different ages and cultures. There is the Sassanian art of the fifth and

sixth centuries, running on, with its exquisite textiles, long after the Arab conquest into the tenth. There exist a few superb paintings of the thirteenth century—the age of Genghis Khan—revealing Sung and Sassanian influences ; and the early thirteenth century is also the familiar age of Rhages pottery. In the fourteenth come Timour, and Háfiz, and Sultanabad ware. But the ordinary Persian art with which most people are fairly well acquainted is the Sefevean art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is to this art, and to the seventeenth-century court of Shah Abbas, that our picturesque authors, painters, and stage-managers go first for their vision of Persian life ; and by confounding Persia with the Kalifate, by mixing up Sassanian textiles of the sixth century with Samanid poetry of the eleventh, by installing the Rhages potters and Háfiz at the court of Shah Abbas, and confusing the Shah with the great Mogul, they obtain a sweet and viscid compound which they are pleased to call Persian civilization. And if they can bring home from the Levant some Turkish cloaks and trousers in which to send their wives to dinner-parties dressed as Persian princes, so much the better for them. But

to me, ignorant of the language, and aware of all these things, to form an idea of Persian civilization seems a difficult, if not impossible task. Wherefore, in my search for civilized characteristics I shall say nothing about the almond trees of Samarkand or the bulbuls that almost invariably sing in them.

Fifth and fourth century Athens, then, Renaissance Italy, and France from Fronde to Revolution, shall be our paragons : their claim to high civility is undisputed, and we happen to know something about them. My immediate purpose is to discover characteristics which are common to them and are not possessed by notoriously savage tribes. If my quest prove something less desperate than the proverbial hunt in a bottle of hay that will be because I have already given myself a hint. For, discussing the characteristics of abject savages I said—and no one contradicted me I think—that the first step a savage takes towards civilization—I was speaking of moral characteristics of course—is the acquisition of self-consciousness and a habit of reflection. These are not the distinguishing qualities of high civility of course : they are much too

common. But it is true to say that an almost complete lack of self-consciousness—other than that brute self-consciousness which a dog will sometimes manifest when he knows he is being stared at—and of even a rudimentary critical sense is what distinguishes the lowest barbarians from the rest of mankind. It is a broad anthropological distinction comparable with that drawn by biologists between animal and vegetable, and helpful only as a point of departure. But refine these qualities, and Self-Consciousness, which leads to examination and comparison of states of mind, will give you the Sense of Values, while the Critical Spirit, universally applied, leads on to the Enthronement of Reason as ultimate arbiter in questions of fact. Here we have characteristics which not savages only, but all inferior societies are without ; and in ransacking my paragons of civility for common and peculiar qualities I shall expect to find that all spring from one or the other.

My notion is that a Sense of Values and Reason Enthroned are the parent qualities of high civilization, and that the search for characteristics that I am about to undertake will resolve itself into a search for their children. Very likely someone will dis-

cover that, right though I may be so far as I go, I have not gone far enough, that there exist other ancestors and other offspring. That will not necessarily invalidate my conclusions : my essay will be proved incomplete but not necessarily incorrect. If, after examining my characteristics, someone discovers others common and peculiar to high civilizations, clearly I shall have to add them to my list. But only the demonstration that some of those in my list were shared by barbarous peoples would force me to abandon my position.

A sense of values, as I understand the term, is possessed only by those who are capable of sacrificing obvious and immediate goods to the more subtle and remote. People who deliberately sacrificed comfort to beauty—with no practical or superstitious end in view—would appear to me to possess a sense of values. To prefer a liberal to a technical education, an education that teaches how to live rather than one that teaches how to gain, is another manifestation of this highly civilized sense. Reason is to my mind enthroned when there is a prevalent opinion that everything requires, and must ultimately admit of, a rational explanation and justification. But it must

not be supposed that when I call a society reasonable, or say that it possesses a sense of values, I mean that all the individuals who compose that society habitually act and think reasonably or feel subtly. Reason may be enthroned in a society where hundreds of thousands are given to the grossest superstition. To call a people reasonable or discriminating is no more exact a generalization than to call a people fair or dark. Also, the enthronement of reason will give different results in different conditions. At Athens it gave elementary speculations as to the meaning of good and the nature of matter, in the eighteenth century it produced religious scepticism and a taste for political economy. What we are about to deal in are the tendencies of vague entities—of societies. We cannot hope, therefore, to make generalizations that will admit of no exceptions.

We must bear in mind that there never has been a perfect civilization. If we conceive the sense of values and enthronement of reason as the parent qualities from which descend civilized characteristics, we must figure these characteristics as a basketful of slippery marbles of which each civilization has grasped what it could. The sense

of values and the critical spirit have spawned a heap of Possibilities : of these some have never been grasped ; others have been grasped by every society that has raised itself a little above sheer barbarism ; while a few—refinements for the most part of qualities which all civilized societies have clutched at—are so polished and elusive that they have slipped through most fingers and yet have been held more or less firmly in a few favoured hands. These favoured and prehensile hands are the groups, the societies, which we agree to call 'highly civilized.' And it is to the discovery and description of the rare and runaway qualities they have grasped, and for a time made their own, that I am about to address myself. Utterly savage tribes, be it noted, have grasped none.

The enthronement of reason as prime arbiter in life is impossible in savage communities for several reasons, of which one of the most obvious is that in savage communities conditions are too precarious and, as a rule, the struggle for existence too acute to admit of the necessary subordination of the instincts of self and family preservation. In fact, the man with a gun is far better equipped for self-preservation than the man

with a club, but the savage has never lived in conditions favourable to that sustained and obstinate reflection which alone can lead to such complicated mechanical inventions as guns. The savage who stops to think runs a considerable risk of stopping altogether. So, like the birds and Sir John Falstaff, he acts on instinct ; and on instinct he depends so much that reason has very little chance of coming effectively into play. The ascendancy of instinct is fatal to reason. Similarly savages cannot have a nice sense of values : no Eskimo can realize that the ultimate value of a sonnet is greater than that of a roasted egg, because the immediate value to him of a roasted egg is altogether too pressing and palpable. In vain do you demonstrate to one living under present threat of death by starvation or frost-bite the superiority of a liberal over a purely practical education. Before he can appreciate good states of mind he must have some security of person. And so the judgments of savages are mostly instinctive and their beliefs traditional, while their tastes are founded on too limited an experience to admit of fine discriminations. The savage who begins to criticize intellectually the customs and conventions of his tribe soon

ceases to exist or ceases to be savage : he has taken a long step towards civilization. So has he who begins, ever so dimly, to perceive that the true value of things is their value as means to states of mind. But so long as a man remains natural and follows instinct he will not go far towards civilization. Civilization comes of reflection and education. Civilization is artificial.

# IV

## THEIR CHARACTERISTICS: THE SENSE OF VALUES

If a dozen tolerably educated people (I am becoming a little tiresome about this epithet 'educated,' but by omitting it I stultify my argument) were asked to name the pre-eminent characteristic of the Athenian mind, eleven would be likely to reply 'love of knowledge' or 'of truth' or 'curiosity' or 'belief in the intellect' or 'reasonableness' or something of that sort. The twelfth, however, with an air of superior subtlety, might well maintain that what really made the Athenians Attic was their exquisite sense of values. What is more, the eleven, so soon as they had got over their pardonable vexation, would almost certainly agree that all were right, that reasonableness and a sense of values were the twin characteristics of Athens in her prime. Σωφροσύνη (sweet reasonableness) and σπουδαιότης (appropriate seriousness) were, as every schoolboy

who begins his education on the classical side is informed, the qualities that distinguished Greek life, thought and art : the one is Reason, sweetened by a Sense of Values, the other a Sense of Values, hardened and pointed by Reason. The very word ' classical,' whose first meaning, according to my dictionary, is ' pertaining to ancient Greece or Rome (her ape),' suggests reasonableness and taste. And these qualities which, with their children, were the distinguishing characteristics of Athens, we shall find, unless I mistake, distinguishing every age of high civilization.

Athenian respect for art and thought is proverbial. That story of a sculptor who, accused of torturing a youth—and torture in the eyes of the Athenians was an abominable crime—admitted the charge, but, having produced in defence the superb statue for which the contortions of his model had served, was acquitted—that story, I say, though certainly fabulous, illustrates the impression left on the ages by Athenian aestheticism. At Lesbos the effigy of Sappho, whose name is mentioned with reluctance in the nicest English homes, adorned the coins ; for by the Lesbians ' the supreme head of song ' was accounted

the supreme glory of the state. And, by the way, a pathetic relic of Italian civility is to be discovered in the fact that the head of Salvator Rosa, the only painter, I will not say of merit, but of repute, that Naples ever produced, still decorates the notes of the Banco di Napoli. The respect paid by Athens to things of the intellect is notorious. An open-minded and severely intellectual discussion of every question that came into their heads seems to have been one of their principal occupations. 'Ce peuple, rieur et curieux,' says Michelet, 'plus qu'aucun jeu d'athlète estime l'ironie socratique.' And who can forget that extraordinary thing which happened at Athens in the year 404 B.C., the performance, in the state theatre and at public cost, of the *Lysistrata*? Not only was Athens in the throes of what, for once, may fairly be described as 'a life and death struggle,' she had just suffered the crushing disaster before Syracuse which was to lead to her final ruin. War-fever was raging. Not the less did the Athenian state give in the public theatre, at the public expense, this violently anti-militarist and anti-patriotic play. That the army was ridiculed, patriotic sentiments held cheap, Spy-hunters and Spartan-eaters mocked, and

the leaders of the democracy mercilessly flayed made no difference. Was the *Lysistrata* the best comedy of the year? That was the question. If so, it ought to receive the prize and a public performance. And performed it was. I can recall nothing in history that manifests more brilliantly a public sense of values.

At Athens the moneys set apart for the theatre were made sacred and inviolate. Not unnaturally, perhaps, did a public which could appreciate the profoundest tragedies and subtlest comedies make art the first charge on the exchequer. The citizen who lived in conditions of simplicity which a British coal-miner would consider derogatory to his human dignity, grudged nothing that was to be spent on the production of plays, the erection of statues, or the construction of temples. And that reminds me of something I should have said in my first chapter: amongst the many things civilization is not —it is not comfort. That savages live uncomfortably proves nothing; for I am not saying that discomfort is but that comfort is not characteristic. The life of an Athenian, so rich and complex in thought and feeling, was in most material blessings indecently deficient. Of civilization, as the

shop-walker understands it, the Athenians had next to none ; and I am glad to see that Mr. Wells has had the honesty to confess his contempt for such ungenteel people. The richest citizens seem often to have slept on the dining-room chairs—to be sure they were benches almost—wrapping themselves up in their ulsters like so many third-class passengers. The houses of the Athenians were small, unpretentious, and devoid of labour-saving devices : domestic conveniences there were none. The furniture and utensils were scanty and plain, and would have provoked the patronizing pity or moral indignation of a class-conscious dustman. And this indifference to comfort was not peculiar to the highly civilized citizens of Athens. Who has not heard English and American tourists animadvert on the extreme inconvenience, draughtiness, and publicity of Italian palaces? The Renaissance had luxury and magnificence and for comfort cared little. Comfort came in with the middle classes. In the eighteenth century the French aristocracy still maintained a tradition of style, keeping *le confort anglais* at a distance ; and thirty years ago it was still a general complaint that travelling in France was spoilt by the

lack of domestic amenity. They are changing all that now, which, however, is none of my present business. My business is to note that this civilized unwillingness to sacrifice style to comfort is an inevitable consequence of the sense of values.

Hardly less notorious than the aestheticism and intellectuality of Athens is the extraordinary honour paid by the Italians of the Renaissance to poets and painters, philosophers and scholars. The Florentines, at that time the most ardent politicians in Europe, yet felt that their art was the greatest glory of their state. In Tuscany the merits of painters and sculptors were canvassed as hotly as in Yorkshire are those of footballers and jockeys. All Italy could not do honour enough to Petrarch, and Boccaccio, Brunelleschi and Mantegna, Bembo and Bibbiena, Politian, Ariosto, Raphael, Michael Angelo and Titian. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that, though they had known and admired such extraordinary figures as Lorenzo the Magnificent, Savonarola, Caesar Borgia, Julius II. and Leo X., the Italians of the early sixteenth century, in Rome and Florence at any rate, regarded Raphael and Michael Angelo as the supreme expressions of their country's genius. Such

men were honoured above kings and princes : but, what is much more important, art—not artists but art—was honoured above trade, politics and war. Let us confess at once, that, though the honour paid to art and thought was as just as it was splendid, the homage paid to individuals was excessive. How should an age of which one of the chief characteristics was a frenzied cult of the individual not deify almost its great men ? An over-emphatic assertion of personality was not so much amiss either in people who had only just escaped from the oppression of the middle ages to learn, in the words of Leon Battista Alberti, that ' men can do all things if they will.' For a thousand heavy years Europe had crouched under a dogma which bade man consider himself a miserable reprobate incapable by nature of right thinking, feeling, or acting. His humanity he was to hold loathsome, the assertion of his personality a tremendous crime : so they had been telling him for a thousand years. And now, suddenly, by the discovery of Greek art and thought, he was made aware that man is the measure of all, that he can and must think and feel and act for himself, that it is for him to create his circumstances, and, mastering nature, to

devise and carry out vast experiments. What wonder if men, realizing on a sudden that in the ancient world man had been, that in the new world he could be, master of his fate ; that the human intellect is sole judge of truth ; that the human will can make and unmake law and custom, changing what had seemed to be the predestined order of the universe ;—what wonder, I say, if the Italians of the Renaissance, drunk with the revelation of man as the master and measure of all, paid honours wellnigh divine to those superb examples of their race visible amongst them, creating beauty, dissipating ignorance, exuding force, changing the very conditions of life and enriching its content ?

In her sense of the supreme importance of art and thought, which is the first and fairest consequence of a sense of values, Renaissance Italy yields hardly to Athens herself. ' Il n'existe de grand dans ce monde que l'amour des arts, l'amour des choses de l'esprit, l'amour de ceux qu'on aime ' : it shall stand as her motto. Though the bent of the eighteenth century's mind was not essentially different, in one important respect that age was quite unlike the Renaissance or the age of Pericles. The eighteenth century was not greatly creative.

The creative impulse came earlier—in the seventeenth : the later period when civilization was at its highest was devoted rather to speculation and contemplation. So here again is evidence that the essential characteristic of a highly civilized society is not that it is creative, but that it is appreciative : savages create furiously. The eighteenth century understood the importance of art ; and its taste, though limited, was pure enough. In the minor and domestic arts it could discriminate finely ; and the rich were willing to pay for beauty not in cash only but in time and trouble. The rich men and women of the eighteenth century cultivated their taste. The poor, as I hope presently to show, so long as to be poor means to be unfree and uneducated, are concerned actively with civilization only in so far as by their labours they make it possible, and, passively, in so far as their manners, habits, opinions and sentiments are coloured by it. For the positive and unmistakable characteristics of civilization it is useless to go to Athenian slaves or French peasants. How far it may be possible in the future for whole populations to become civilized is a question I must reserve for my last chapter.

At present I am dealing with the eighteenth century, an age in which the fire that glowed on the heights radiated to the upper middle class and perhaps just warmed the lower. I can hardly think it went further though, in the opinion of Buckle, who may be reckoned a pretty good judge and no flatterer of any age but his own, 'one of the leading characteristics of the eighteenth century, and one which pre-eminently distinguished it from all that preceded, was a craving after knowledge on the part of those classes from which knowledge had hitherto been shut out.' [1] Knowledge was the grand desideratum: the eighteenth century, though it respected art, reserved its finest enthusiasm for things of the intellect. Athens had excelled in literature, the plastic arts, science, and philosophy, and her enthusiasm for all had been boundless; the Renaissance which excelled in visual art and erudition reserved its most fiery admiration for these; while the generous heart of the eighteenth century, obeying the same instinct, thrilled most intensely to the triumphs of the speculative intelligence. Mathematical, philosophical, and scientific investigation came first; and an age which

[1] *History of Civilization*, i. 430.

prided itself on philanthropy naturally set store by political science and economy—studies still in their fresh and attractive infancy—wherein, they believed, not unreasonably perhaps, lay the keys that one day would unlock the gates of Utopia. The story of David Hume's success in Paris gives an idea of the tone of polite society. His appointment as secretary to the British Embassy was an international event. *Tout Paris* was at his feet, slightly to the annoyance of Mr. Walpole, who seems to have felt that this highly civilized society perhaps underrated the value of a good accent and aristocratic connections. I shall not insist on the honours paid to Voltaire, Buffon, or the memory of Newton ; but I will just venture to remind my readers that these French ladies and gentlemen did actually read the authors they admired.

From this sense of values, from the intellectual curiosity of the *beau monde*, flowed a consequence which has for ever endeared the eighteenth century to civilized people : these studious fine ladies and gentlemen were not to be bullied or bored. They were not the sort to put up with a crack-brain style or erudite prolixity. They insisted that their teachers—Catherine the Great was fond of

styling herself 'élève de Voltaire'—should express themselves in pleasant and perspicuous language. So much deference was Science expected to pay, if not to beauty, at least to *ton*. The eighteenth century had standards, and it liked to see them respected. Nor were these standards confined to the writing of prose: the eighteenth century had standards in life. Indeed, it is a mark of civilized ages that they maintain standards below which things must not fall. This comes of having a sense of values.[1]

Have you never heard a great good-humoured fellow, replete with a fabulously expensive dinner in an impressively ill-furnished and overlit restaurant, excited by Saumur (recommended as Perrier Jouet, 1911), and a great deal of poor conversation half-drowned by even noisier music, observe, as he permits the slovenly waiter to choose him the longest cigar, 'That will do, sonny; the best 's good enough for me'? That sort of thing happens when people have lost their standards: also, there are now but two or three restaurants in London where it is an unqualified pleasure to dine. The best is not good enough for one who has

[1] I have discussed this question at greater length in *Since Cézanne*, in an essay from which I quote freely.

standards, who knows precisely what he wants and insists on getting it. The modern Englishman apparently has none : to go to the most ostentatious shop and there buy the most expensive thing is all that he can do. Fifty years ago the nice housewife still prided herself on knowing the right place for everything. There was a little man in a back street who imported just the coffee she liked, another who blended tea to perfection, a third who had the secret of smoking hams. All have vanished now ; and the housewife betakes herself to the stores. The March Hare's paradox has ceased to be paradoxical : no longer do we insist on getting what we like, we like what we get. It is a small thing, perhaps, that you may dine at any of the half-dozen 'smartest' restaurants in London, pay a couple of pounds for your meal, and be sure that a French commercial traveller, bred to the old standards of the provincial ordinary, would have sent for the cook and given him a scolding. Consider, however, the cause : it is not that the most expensive English restaurants fail to engage the most expensive French *chefs* ; they are engaged, but they soon fall below the mark because there is no one to keep them up to it. The

clients have no standards. It is a small thing : but that way barbarism lies.

When I say that civilization insists on standards I am not falling into that antiquated error of supposing that civilization is something which imposes a grievous uniformity on the individual. The critics and scholars of the Victorian age, too coarse and insensitive to appreciate Racine and Poussin, explained the inferiority of these artists to Tennyson and Turner by the fact that they were products of an excessive civilization which made impossible free personal expression and put an absolute veto on experiment and development. Highly civilized ages, so the story ran, insisted on absolute uniformity : they were stiff and rigid. As a matter of fact, artists have experimented quite as freely in civilized as in other ages : you may pick instances where you please. At Athens, within a little more than a hundred years, there was the change from the archaic style in scultpure to the Phidian, and from the Phidian to the Praxitelean ; in literature from Aeschylus to Sophocles, and from Sophocles to the new comedy. In Italy the beginning of the fifteenth century saw a revolution in painting—the end of the

Giottesque movement and the discoveries of Masaccio, Castagno, and Mantegna, while before the sack of Rome Raphael and Michael Angelo had again modified the tradition and founded a new school. Every student of French literature knows that the admirers of Corneille were surprised and even shocked by the style of Racine, and the development of eighteenth out of seventeenth century prose is what no extension lecturer suffers his victims to ignore. The rise of a school of sentiment and nature in the second half of the eighteenth century was generally expatiated on, out of national vanity I presume, by those very critics who denounced the static uniformity of that age. They did not know, perhaps, that at about the same time Gluck and his followers were giving almost as sharp a turn to the musical tradition as was to be given a hundred years later by Wagner.

Civilized ages do no doubt tend to respect tradition in art as in other things ; and there is a danger that respect for tradition may degenerate into worship of conventions, which—unlike tradition which is the expression of accumulated experience—are no more than the tricks and habits of a recent

past standardized for general use. On the other hand, in civilized ages there will be a sensitive and cultivated public, in sympathy with the artist, and disposed to allow him to know best what is best for himself. Such a public will not easily be gulled into mistaking an accepted formula for the great tradition. Neither Masaccio and his followers, nor the school of early eighteenth-century prose-writers, nor towards the close of that century the early Romantics, had to join in such bitter battles as those that raged round the names of Hugo, Wagner, Rossetti, Mallarmé, and Cézanne. Because in civilized ages the public was less brutally insensitive than it was in the nineteenth century, because circumstances were less exasperatingly unsympathetic, the artist was not often driven into noisy and wasteful protest. No genuine artist is a protestant by nature. The rôle is forced on him by the malevolence of his contemporaries. And protestantism is the bane of art, for he who begins in protesting is in danger of ending on a tub. Civilization tends to make protestation unnecessary.

The uniformity of highly civilized ages, such as it is, though it may have disadvantages of which presently I must speak, is

not fatal to art. Partly it is, no doubt, the consequence of a formidable and instructed public opinion not lightly to be disregarded ; largely, it comes of the fact that artists, finding themselves in a well-disposed world, are relieved from the necessity of making spectacular protests. Between artist and public in a highly civilized society there is a good deal of common ground which the former has no reason to suspect of being treacherous or to despise as being probably barren. On the contrary, he assumes sympathy and understanding ; and because a civilized public is less likely than another to mistake the débris of moribund movements for tradition, he feels no intolerable fear of having his hands tied with conventions. In a highly civilized age the artist is neither hostile to nor mistrustful of tradition, but helps himself freely to whatever it can give. And another cause of apparent uniformity in highly civilized ages is to be found in another characteristic of highly civilized societies, a characteristic which springs partly from a sense of values, partly from reasonableness, and is closely related to the civilized insistence on standards : highly civilized societies are polite.

Good manners are an amenity the value

of which people with a sense of values will not under-estimate. But good manners come also of that reasonableness which is the other prime characteristic of civilization, since from reasonableness come open-mindedness, a willingness to listen to what others have to say, and a distaste for dictatorial methods. As, however, I am now trying to describe the defluents of the civilized sense of values, I shall not trespass on the ground I propose to cover in another chapter. We will, if you please, leave reasonableness and her children alone. It is clear that a sense of values which seeks to extract from life the best that it can give will of itself insure politeness—his best being what no man parts with for anything less.[1] Also, one possessing a sense of values will not fail to appreciate the sheer intrinsic superiority of courteous over emphatic and ill-bred behaviour. How this civilized taste for urbanity will affect young, original and enterprising artists will depend to some extent on their temperaments. But there

[1] Pericles in the funeral speech makes a point of Athenian good manners: 'in private life politeness is our guarantee of harmony.' Thucydides, ii. 37.

For the importance attached by the Renaissance to good manners, see *Il Cortegiano, passim*, and remember that this was the handbook of the educated classes.

are always two ways of compassing a change, the intelligent and seemly, and the blackguardly and strident. Civilized people prefer the former.

I am not, of course, being so silly as to pretend that the artists of civilized ages are superior to those of uncivilized. Art can flourish in either ; it can turn either to account. We do feel that some artists are highly civilized, Phidias, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Raphael, Racine, Molière, Poussin, Milton, Wren, Jane Austen, and Mozart ; we do feel that others are not, the builders of the Gothic cathedrals, Villon, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Blake, Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, Whitman, Turner, Wagner, and the Congolese fetish-makers : we cannot say that one set is superior to the other. The fact is, the difference between them is not fundamental : it is a matter of means, not of ends. The end of art is the same everywhere and at all times—the perfect expression of a peculiar state of aesthetic ecstasy or, as I should say, the creation of significant form. It is in the means by which they achieve this end, in their attitude to and their attack on the problem, that civilized artists differ from uncivilized. Art is one of the two most personal things in the

world. Wherefore, fully to appreciate the peculiarities of civilized art, we should have to consider those of the civilized individual ; and as this individual is presently to have a whole chapter to himself I think we may allow the civilized artist to wait his turn. For the moment I need say only that it is foolish to suppose that civilized artists are either superior or inferior to uncivilized, and no wiser to maintain that civilization is either favourable or unfavourable to art. Of our three typical societies two were extraordinarily creative, the third ordinarily so. Civilization is neither favourable nor unfavourable : but, because different temperaments thrive in different atmospheres, it seems probable that civilization may be the one or the other to particular artists. How many mute, inglorious Miltons, Raphaels, and Mozarts may not have lost heart and gone under in the savage insecurity of the dark ages ? And may not the eighteenth century, which clipped the wings of Blake, have crushed the fluttering aspirations of a dozen Gothically-minded geniuses and laughed some budding Wagner or Webster out of all idea of self-expression ?

The popular theory that high civilizations necessarily impose uniformity on individuals

is what popular theories generally are : consider the Renaissance. Nevertheless where the standard of culture and intelligence is high, clearly the exceptional person will be less inclined and less likely to distinguish himself from the mass than where it is low. Thus there may arise a tendency to uniformity. This is a danger of civilization; but a mere glance at history suffices to show that it is not a characteristic. A danger it is however. And as I wish to be fair, and as I have insisted from the first that civilization was not the ideal I shall, with your leave, devote a few pages to trying to show, by means of an example, just what this danger amounts to. Let us consider the case of France and England.

An Englishman of any superiority must stand on his own feet, because there is nothing about him on which he could deign to lean.[1] He must make his own way, because all public roads lead through intolerably dreary country to intellectual slums and garden suburbs. The life of a first-rate English man or woman is one long assertion of his or her personality in the face of unsympathetic or actively hostile

[1] Here again I am repeating what I have said already in an essay on Criticism.

circumstances. An English boy born with fine sensibility, a peculiar feeling for art, or an absolutely first-rate intelligence, finds himself from the outset at loggerheads with the world in which he is to live. For him there can be no question of accepting those national conventions which express what is meanest in a distasteful society. To begin with, he will not go to church or chapel on Sundays : it might be different were it a question of going to Mass. The hearty conventions of family life which make almost impossible relations at all intimate or subtle arouse in him nothing but a longing for escape. He will be reared, probably, in an atmosphere where all thought that leads to no practical end is despised, or gets, at most, a perfunctory compliment when some great man, who in the teeth of opposition has won to a European reputation, is duly rewarded with a title or an obituary column in *The Times*. As for artists, they, unless they happen to have achieved commercial success or canonization in some public gallery, are pretty sure to be family jokes. Thus, all his finer feelings will be constantly outraged ; and he will live a truculent, shamefaced misfit, with *John Bull* under his nose and *Punch*

round the corner, till, at some public school, a course of compulsory games and the Arnold tradition either breaks his spirit or makes him a rebel for life.

In violent opposition to most of what surrounds him, any greatly gifted, and tough, English youth is likely to become more and more aware of himself and his own isolation. Meanwhile, his French compeer is having rough corners gently obliterated by contact with a well-oiled whetstone, and is growing daily more conscious of solidarity with his accomplices in a peculiar and gracious secret. France, in fact, has still a civilization. The English lad grows more and more individualistic. Daily he becomes more eccentric, more adventurous and more of 'a character.' Very easily will he snap all conventional cables and, learning to rely entirely on himself, trust only to his own sense of what is good and true and beautiful. This personal sense is all that he has to follow ; and in following it he will meet with no conventional obstacle that he need hesitate for one moment to demolish. English civilization, or what passes for civilization, is so smug and hypocritical, so grossly Philistine, and at bottom so brutal,

that every first-rate Englishman necessarily becomes an outlaw. He grows by kicking ; and his personality flourishes, unhampered by sympathetic, clinging conventions, nor much—and this is important too—by the inquisitorial tyranny of Government : for, till the beginning of the war at any rate, an Englishman who dared to defy the conventions had less than a Frenchman to fear from the laws. As a result of all this, England is not a pleasant country to live in for anyone who has a sense of beauty or humour, a taste for social amenities, and a thin skin : on the other hand, we have that magnificently unmitigated individualism and independence which have enabled particular Englishmen of genius to create the greatest literature in all history and elaborate the most original, profound and fearless thought in modern.

If it takes two to make a quarrel it takes as many to make a bargain ; and if even the best Frenchmen are willing to make terms with society, that must be because society has something to offer them worth accepting. What French society has to offer is French civilization. Conventions are limitations on thought, feeling, and action ; and, as such, the enemies of originality and character,

hateful, therefore, to men richly endowed with either. French conventions, however, have a pleasant air of liberality, and France offers to those who will be bound by them partnership in the least imperfect of modern civilizations. The bribe is tempting. Also, the pill itself is nicely coated. Feel thus, think thus, act thus, says the French tradition, not for moral, still less for utilitarian, reasons, but for aesthetic. Stick to the rules, not because they are right or profitable, but because they are seemly—nay, beautiful. We are not telling you to be respectable, we are inviting you not to be a lout. We are offering you, free of charge, a trademark that carries credit all the world over. 'How French he (or she) is!' Many a foreigner would give his eyes to have as much said of him.

In noting the consequence of this French respect for the rules, we have to register profit and loss. What France has lost in colour she has gained in fertility; and in a universal Honours List for intellectual and artistic prowess the number of French names would be out of all proportion to the size and wealth of the country. Furthermore, it is this traditional basis that has kept French culture up to a certain level of

excellence. France has never been without standards. Therefore it has been to France that the rest of Europe has always looked for some measure of fine thinking, delicate feeling, and general amenity. Without her conventionality it may be doubted whether France could have remained so long the centre of civilization. On the other hand, it is true that the picture presented by French history offers comparatively few colossal achievements or stupendous characters. With the latter, indeed, it is remarkably ill supplied : and whereas most of the great and many of the secondary English writers, thinkers, and artists have been great 'characters,' the slightly monotonous good sense and refinement of French literary and artistic life is broken only by a few massive and surprising figures. I cannot doubt that a certain number of Frenchmen, born with a promise of high originality, never succeed in being or expressing themselves completely, because they are enticed by the charms of the French tradition into accepting conventions and conforming to rules. 'C'est convenu,' 'C'est inadmissible' are phrases that start much too readily to the tongues of intelligent and well-educated Frenchmen. That is because they have

never been compelled, as their English compeers have, to think and feel and find a way for themselves on pain of having to pass their lives imprisoned, like Chinese malefactors, in a box where they can neither lie nor sit nor stand nor lean nor kneel, nor do anything but wallow. And so I admit that gifted young Frenchmen accept conventions and rules of life because these, in France, are not patently absurd or shocking; and they are not patently absurd or shocking, I admit, because they are the relics of a civilized tradition : what I will not admit is that this is a serious charge against civilization.

Turn from modern France and consider the great age of Greece. It was as prolific almost as seventeenth-century England in vivid and original characters. Neither is the Italian Renaissance a conspicuous example of moral and intellectual conformity. If France, which for the last three hundred years has been the most highly civilized country in Europe, impresses us by a plethora of first-rate minds and a diffusion of culture rather than by a crowd of gorgeous minds and amazing characters, that may have as much to do with the temper of the race as with anything else. It is prob-

able that France owes her deficiency, such as it is, not more to excess of civilization than England owes her exuberance to lack of it. Barbarism will not of itself provoke genius and character and a turn for self-expression in language ; but hitherto England has cherished something which may account for much, and that is a respect for privacy superior far to anything enjoyed by Continental countries. The English eccentric, the crank, the genius, driven by the prevailing atmosphere into odd holes and corners, has there been suffered to exist and develop much as he chose. That is why the reputation of England as a nursery of originality and character stands, and deserves to stand, high. It stands yet ; but it may not stand much longer. There is a movement to undermine it. This toleration of oddity is anisocratic. Englishmen should learn to conform ; they should be compelled to develop along judiciously laid grooves. Discipline and compulsion have come more than ever into fashion since England in contempt of her traditions accepted compulsory service. And if the season-ticket holders on one hand, and the trade unions on the other, succeed in doing their worst,

it is probable that within a few decades England, disgarlanded of genius, character, and originality, will appear naked in her normal barbarity, an object of universal merriment and contempt. She will have eliminated her individualism ; but she will not be the more civilized for that.

He who possesses a sense of values cannot be a Philistine ; he will value art and thought and knowledge for their own sakes, not for their possible utility. When I say for their own sakes, I mean, of course, as direct means to good states of mind which alone are good as ends. No one now imagines that a work of art lying on an uninhabited island has absolute value, or doubts that its potential value lies in the fact that it can at any moment become a means to a state of mind of superlative excellence. Works of art being direct means to aesthetic ecstasy are direct means to good. And the disinterested pursuit and perception of scientific and philosophical truth, as they provoke analogous states of emotional intensity, may be assigned to the same class. But the value of knowledge is different. Knowledge is not a direct means to good : its action is remote.

An exact knowledge of the dates of the Kings and Queens of England will put no one into a flutter. Knowledge is a food of infinite potential value which must be assimilated by the intellect and imagination before it can become positively valuable. Only when it has been so assimilated does it become a direct means to good states of mind ; but without this food both intellect and imagination tend to grow stunted and wry, are in danger even of starving to death.

It is the nourishing quality in knowledge that people with a sense of values most esteem ; though obviously it has a practical importance as well : knowledge makes it possible to build motor-cars and mend legs. What is peculiar to civilized people is, in the first place, that they are capable of recognizing the value of knowledge as a means to exquisite spiritual states, and, in the second, that they esteem this value above any remote, utilitarian virtue. Beauty, of course, has no practical value whatever. A good picture may promote useful conduct, but a bad one is as likely and more to achieve the same result. It is the mark of a barbarian—a Philistine—that, having no sense of values, failing to discriminate between ends and

means and between direct means and remote, he wants to know what is the use of art and speculation and pure science. The reply that they are direct, or almost direct, means to emotional states of the highest value and intensity for obvious reasons does not impress him. Useless to tell him that these are the keys that unlock the gates of Paradise, unless somehow you can give him a taste for Paradise. And how can you give him that? Only, I suppose, by giving him a glimpse of Paradise. And how a glimpse is to be given I am sure I do not know; but I conceive it is what education ought to do. If teachers could somehow make ordinary boys and girls grasp the quite simple fact that, though the world may seem to offer nothing better than a little money and a great deal of work, any one of them can, if he or she will, have a life full of downright, delectable pleasures; if teachers could make them realize that the delight of being alone in a bed-sitting room with an alert, well-trained, and well-stocked mind and a book, is greater than that of owning yachts and race-horses, and that the thrill of a great picture or a quartet by Mozart is keener (and it is an honest sensualist who says it) than that of the first sip of a glass of cham-

pagne ; if the teachers could do this, the teachers, I think, would have solved the central problem of humanity. I cannot solve it : I can but say that the only people who possess the key to this palace of pleasures are the people who know how to value art and thought for their own sakes and knowledge as an instrument of culture.

The disinterestedness of the Greeks in their pursuit of truth has been made a reproach to them by the Philistines. Mathematical speculation and the study of geometry they pushed to a point that still astonishes those who are competent to measure the ground covered ; in metaphysical, ethical, and political thought they are our masters ; while in the theory of mechanics they went far enough to throw out, by way of parergon, a model steam-engine, but, to the horror of succeeding ages, did not trouble to exploit the invention. They never made a locomotive, gunpowder, or even a spinning-jenny. They sought truth for its own sake, and as a means to culture, not as a means to power and comfort. What is more, those who sought it for material benefits and personal profit they despised, holding such base exertions

beneath the dignity of free men and incompatible with the finest life. It may surprise some scholars even to learn that at Athens it was thought dishonouring to take an active part in trade, yet both Plato and Aristotle affirm it. The Athenians wished to live richly rather than to be rich ; which is why we reckon them the most highly civilized people in history.

To the Athenians the idea that a thing of beauty requires other justification than its beautifulness did at times occur ; chiefly, perhaps, because to the Athenian mind there were very few ideas that did not. The Italians of the Renaissance were less thoughtful. It must be confessed, however, that in the later eighteenth century the French abused the art of painting shamelessly. The pictures of Greuze, for instance, were unblushingly recommended as moral pick-me-ups, stimulating sensibility, and provoking pity. As a result, there are still people of taste who cannot bring themselves to see what an excellent painter Greuze really was. The eighteenth century, as already I have admitted, was sounder on truth than on beauty ; just as the Renaissance was sounder on beauty than on truth. And yet the latter's respect for pure, disinterested

scholarship was true, and has been made a truism by Browning's fantastic verse :

'That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it :
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred 's soon hit :
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him !
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find Him.
So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,
Ground he at grammar ;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife :
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be !
Properly based *Oun*—
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.'

That, whatever else it may be, is the antithesis of Philistinism : it is a life spent in the pursuit of 'useless knowledge.' The grammarian is at once superb and slightly ridiculous ; but what makes him ridiculous is not his disregard of common values but

a maniacal concentration on one good thing to the neglect of all others. The specialist is never completely civilized. The eighteenth century could be as unpractical as the Renaissance. Amongst the lower intellectual orders it is still fashionable to reproach that charming age with having devoted itself to such purely speculative sciences as mathematics and geometry, rather than to the more useful Biology and Chemistry. Important mechanical discoveries were made in the age of reason, but the best minds took very little interest in them. The only 'useful' sciences that got much flattering attention were Political Science and Political Economy, which I am so old-fashioned as still to regard as useful. Few historians fail to ascribe the doctrinaire character of the French Revolution to the century's preoccupation with abstractions. A generation brought up on Darwin and Spenser, they think, could never have been so remorselessly uncompromising, so absurdly theoretical. I know not what the remnants of the Russian *bourgeoisie* will say to that.

From a sense of values comes that desire for, and belief in, liberal education which no civilized age has been without. The richest and fullest life obtainable, a life which

contains the maximum of vivid and exquisite experiences, is the end of every civilized man's desire. Because he desires it he aims at complete self-development and complete self-expression : and these are to be achieved only by those who have learnt to think and feel and discriminate, to let the intellect play freely round every subject, and the emotions respond appropriately to all stimuli. Knowledge in addition is needed ; for without knowledge the intellect remains the slave of prejudice and superstition, while the emotions sicken on a monotonous and cannibalistic diet. The civilized man desires an education which shall be as direct a means as possible to what alone is good as an end. He cultivates his powers of thinking and feeling, pursues truth and acquires knowledge, not for any practical value that these may possess, but for themselves, or—that I may distinguish him sharply from the date-collector and competition-winner—for their power of revealing the rich and complex possibilities of life. The Philistine, wanting the sense of values, expects education to show him the way to wealth and power, things which are valuable only in so far as they are more or less remote means to that ultimate good

whither liberal education leads direct. Liberal education teaches us to enjoy life ; practical education to acquire things that may enable us or someone else to enjoy it.

To few things did an Athenian attach greater importance than to the education of his son. When, for a short time, the Mitylenians became masters of the sea, they thought the greatest punishment they could inflict on disobedient allies was to deprive them of their schools. With the exception of rhetoric and the use of arms, no part, I think, of the Athenian curriculum aimed directly at practical results. Italy was heir to Greece : and there can be no fairer testimony to the strength and taste of the Renaissance than that for almost four hundred years it committed the governing classes of Europe to an education that was liberal so far as it went. On this fundamental question of education we know exactly what was the best mind of Italy ; for Baldassare Castiglione, having treated the subject with admirable thoroughness, has summed up his arguments and illustrations thus : ' Il vero e principal ornamento dell' animo in ciascuno penso io che siano le lettere.' In the new curriculum there was, of course, plenty of dust and ashes ; but the tradi-

tion inherited by the Renaissance from Greece, was after all based on Greek, and therein differed completely from the pedantic futilities of the middle age. By the study of Greek letters and philosophy the young *élite* of all nations was at least given the chance of acquiring those things that are best worth having. Europe had a traditional education that was essentially liberal. The tradition went unchallenged through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though in the latter the curriculum was brought up to date, without being vulgarized, by a more general and systematic teaching of mathematics and geometry. In the nineteenth, with the industrial revolution, the rise of the middle classes, the religion of money-making sometimes called 'the gospel of work,' and the passion for 'getting on,' it was violently attacked and began visibly to wane. During what is called by Mr. H. G. Wells 'the tragic happenings of the last few years,' [1] and by liberally educated people 'the war,' it perished.

A sense of values and the power of discriminating between ends and means suffice to make a man an individualist. To be sure that other parent quality, the enthronement

[1] *The Outline of History.* Introduction.

of reason, also breeds a sense of the supreme importance of the individual ; but as in considering the civilized man's desire for self-development we have come near this highly civilized characteristic, we may as well deal with it at once. Anyone who realizes that the sole good as an end is a good state of mind, and that there are no grounds for supposing that such a thing as a collective mind exists, will naturally set store by the individual in whom alone absolute good is to be found. For such a one to forget that all generalizations must ultimately be tested by the experience of individuals would be unpardonable, seeing that to talk about the good of the herd, as though it were something different from the good of the individuals who compose the herd, is recognized even by politicians, when it suits their purpose, as barbarous folly. Thus, British statesmen, apt though they are to speak of British interests as though they were different from the interests of the people who live in Britain, were profoundly shocked by the extravagances of German journalists who exalted above the individual German the German state. The state cannot be an end in itself : it can be no more than a means to those good states of mind

which alone are good as ends, and are to be found only in individuals.

The Athenians were often put to it to reconcile the rights of the citizen with the needs of the city ; but at any rate until years of war had begun to coarsen their sense of values they generally succeeded in preserving free play for personality, thereby making possible that civilization which remains the wonder and glory of the Western world. Of Athenian liberty, however, I shall have so much to say in the next chapter, when I come to discuss the eldest child of reason, Tolerance, that for the moment I will ask the reader to take it for granted. Here I will observe only that the Greeks were in some sort the inventors of individualism. In a world of Oriental superstition and servitude, they first stood up to assert the personal significance of the educated, intelligent citizen. To them first came the idea that a man with senses, emotions, and a brain was the master of a universe ; that the world was his oyster which, with intelligence and courage, he could open ; that the individual intellect is a match for the powers of nature ; that every man who can feel and think is a king.

The Italians of the Renaissance felt so acutely the importance of the individual as the chief source of all that is thrilling, significant, and splendid, that, as I have admitted, in their glorification of personality they pushed, perhaps, too far. Not content with claiming for the individual complete liberty of expression and experiment, they cultivated personality to a point at which it became hubris and egotism : worse still, they sometimes took these essentially barbarous traits for personal distinction. The more perfectly civilized ages of Pericles and Voltaire never made that mistake : good manners and sociability, characteristics which develop as civilized societies become more and more appreciative of the pleasures of conversation, abated in these the individualistic tendency to aggressive self-assertion. But that all three were intensely individualistic will not be disputed. The individualism of the Greeks is, perhaps, best seen in their philosophy, and that of the Renaissance in its extravagance. It is unnecessary, I presume, to prove that the eighteenth century was individualistic by showing how all that mass of political thought which culminated in the Revolution based itself on the rights of man

and his peculiar significance as a human being.

About something which follows necessarily from individualism, though quite as much from the individualism born of reason as of that which springs from a sense of values—about Cosmopolitanism I mean, perhaps a word should be said. No intelligent individualist is likely to feel much affection for the state, which, in fact, he regards as, at best, a dangerous makeshift. A tendency towards cosmopolitanism, based on individualism, a movement of liberation from the herd-instinct, is the unfailing accompaniment of an advance in civility : indeed, it might stand almost for its measure. Over the savage herd instinct bears absolute sway ; the savage has the dimmest notion of values that transcend the tribe and no sympathies outside it. But a civilized man sympathizes with other civilized men no matter where they were born or to what race they belong and feels uneasy with brutes and Philistines though they be his blood-relations living in the same parish. I am not going to prove by instances the cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century ; only to appease the curiosity of any ignorant person who in the way of business may be

obliged to read this book I will give one quotation from an eminent authority :

> ' Il reste à signaler un caractère de la philosophie du xviii^e siècle, qui dépend de tous les autres ou s'y relie : elle est cosmopolite, et elle donne naissance à une littérature cosmopolite. . . . Les armées du roi étaient battues par un Prussien : mais ce Prussien parlait français, et il était plus pareil à nous qu'un grenadier qui mourait pour lui. Ainsi le vainqueur de Rosbach rendait hommage à la civilisation française : notre patriotisme se contentait de cette victoire de l'esprit. . . . Son rationalisme (that of an eighteenth-century Frenchman) lui interdisait les préjugés de couleur et de race. L'homme digne de ce nom est celui qui n'obéit qu'à la raison : mais cet homme n'est pas Français plutôt qu'Allemand : il est Européen, il est Chinois, il est partout où il y a des hommes ; et toutes les vérités que conçoit la raison humaine sont faites pour cet homme universel.' [1]

From the writings of the Greek intellectuals I have already quoted passages testifying to a fully developed cosmopolitanism and a brave contempt for patriotic limitations : you remember how Democritus of Abdera said that ' every country is accessible to a wise man, and that a good soul's

[1] Lanson, *Histoire de la Littérature française*.

fatherland is the whole earth.' The Renaissance follows suit, for as soon as men begin to think freely the grip of patriotism is loosened ; so one is not surprised to find Codrus Urceus, to pick a name at random, writing somewhere about the year 1500, that ' wherever a learned man fixes his seat, there is home.' And obviously an Englishman who cares for beauty, truth, or knowledge, may find himself more in sympathy with a Frenchman, German, or Chinaman who shares his tastes than with a compatriot who shares those of *Punch* and *John Bull*.

Patriotism, however, is a prejudice which will hardly be eradicated from a state or society. Cosmopolitanism, the logical consequence of Individualism, is naturally an attribute of an individual rather than of a community. The Athenians were certainly patriotic ; but their patriotism is cleared of some of its ugliness by the fact that they do genuinely seem to have loved Athens for what she was, not simply and brutally because she was *their* city. Their emotion was felt intelligently for definite and lovable qualities, not stupidly for a flag or a name. Also the Athenians had this excuse : their state was surrounded by hostile and menacing states ; they felt inevitably that they were on

the defensive. By the middle of the fifteenth century the patriotic fervour of the Italian cities had cooled considerably. The tyrants hired armies of mercenaries for their own political purposes ; the citizens took little or no part in the dynastic wars. Had the Italians realized that Italian civilization as a whole was menaced, as it was, by German and Spanish barbarians, and had they armed themselves in defence, certainly they would have lowered the level of their civility, but they would have had the same justification as the Athenians. Almost all the wars of the eighteenth century were contests between highly specialized armies of professional soldiers : the absence of patriotic passion and hate amongst the better-educated civilians is notorious.

All civilized people have a sense of values, which is not the same as saying that they have a system of ethics. In ethics they may be completely sceptical, they may accept some standard *à priori* theory, or one based on personal intuition, or they may adopt the utilitarian doctrine and profess to seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number ; but one morality no thoroughly civilized person will ever accept, and that is the morality which aims at the greatest happi-

ness of the majority of an arbitrarily and indiscriminately chosen group. A highly civilized person can never unquestioningly accept the ethics of patriotism. Indeed, the civilized person will tend to think less and less in terms of groups ; the conception of 'his country' as an entity with interests distinct from those of the rest of the world will gradually lose precision in his eyes ; until, at last, recognizing the individual as one entity with distinct interests and the planet as another, he begins to feel that the boundaries and frontiers of all other reputed entities are vague and arbitrary. There are individuals and there is the human race : where powerful and well-trained minds are speculating freely, the belief in the existence of trustworthy stepping-stones between these two solid realities tends to collapse. For convenience—*e.g.* for administrative or biological purposes—individuals may be considered in groups : men, women, and children, people with only one leg or lung, short people, tall people, red-haired people, educated people, dipsomaniacs, railway-porters, hairdressers, Germans, English, Turks : but such groups can never possess the reality, the unmistakable character and incontrovertible existence, the individuality,

in fact, of individuals. What is more, no groups appear to the civilized consideration to have less reality or fewer or vaguer common characteristics than those which are based on geographical position or ethnological hypotheses.

Cosmopolitanism is a weapon with which civilization is apt to defend itself when nationalism becomes menacing. For nationalism is a terrible enemy to civility, a disease which undermined at last the constitution of Athens and threatened more than once the serene health of the eighteenth century. It may be doubted whether religion itself has been so fruitful a mother of barbarous woes as this modern manifestation of the herd-instinct. How many millions of human lives have been broken or impoverished by this survival from a pre-human age? What possibilities of general good have been sacrificed to this irritable appendix? And yet nationalism is a bogey: none can tell you precisely what a nation is. Germany and England exist as two football clubs exist. The executive committees can put up two elevens to fight each other; while their respective backers cheer and hoot. Yet no one seriously doubts that a railwayman from Crewe has more in common with a railway-

man from Sheffield than with the chairman of the Crewe Chamber of Commerce who happens also to be chairman of the football club. All men are capable of taking sides, and most are capable of taking any side : that is why the spirit of nationalism is so easily kept alive. But if there be any real meaning in the classification of men under national headings, there must surely be certain characteristics common and peculiar to all those of one class. What are they ? What common and peculiar characteristics have Milton, Mr. Bottomley, Shelley, Mr. Lloyd George, Darwin, Sir Oliver Lodge, the Duke of Wellington, Vesta Tilley, the Bishop of London, Bishop Berkeley, Blake, Coleridge, and Sir William Joynson-Hicks ? If it comes to that, what peculiar characteristics have you or I in common with the man who won the war for us ? He speaks English ; so did President Wilson, so does the Kaiser : Mr. George speaks Welsh also which I, at least, do not. There are, however, other ancient and modern languages in which I believe we have the advantage of him ; so that language, instead of bringing us together, suggests rather a classification which might keep us apart. We were all three born in the British Isles ;

so perhaps were Karl Scheidnitz, Marius Pierrefitte, Demetri Protopopoff, Socrate Konrioulos, Haggi Baba, Abdul Latif, Po Chi Ling, Ernst Rothschild and Chiozza Money. Am I to suppose that nationality, that thing for which so many evils have been endured, so many blessings foregone, is just the thing that these gentlemen have in common with each other, with Mr. Lloyd George, and with me? If so, you can easily understand why civilized people see a certain unreality in the grouping of men by nations.

One of the qualities that most clearly distinguish a civilized man from a savage is a sense of humour; and the sense of humour is in the last analysis nothing but a highly developed sense of values. By a sense of humour I do not mean a taste for buffoonery and romps; for aught I know the Veddahs of Ceylon set thorns in each other's mats, and the Yorubas of West Africa regale each other with breezy anecdotes. I mean the power of perceiving the ludicrousness of taking things too seriously and giving them an undue importance; and this power is enjoyed only by those who can tell ends from means. To attach to a means the importance due to an end is

ridiculous ; and because all human achievement falls something short of the ideal, to a thoroughly civilized person all human endeavour will appear at moments slightly comic. Nevertheless, the passionate pursuit of love, beauty, and truth will be laughed at loudly and for long only by fools who cannot understand the passion or appreciate its object. The state of mind of a lover, of one who is creating or contemplating beauty, or of one who is lost in a speculative ' O Altitudo ' is good in itself, and however laborious and unlovely the means employed in attaining to it we ought not to judge them inappropriate—though in fact we often do. Because they are good as ends such things can hardly be taken too seriously. But quit this sanctuary of ends and enter the world of means : begin to consider people busying themselves about politics, trade, dignity, comfort, reputation, honour, and the like ; and soon you will catch them treating these means with the intense, inflexible earnestness due only to ends. They are taking these things much too seriously ; your sense of values will tell you that, and your sense of humour will reward it with a glow of peculiar, civilized pleasure.

This pleasure which the savage, with his rudimentary sense of values, his inability to distinguish ends from means, cannot know, is enjoyed by all civilized people in a greater or less degree. A sense of humour is a characteristic of the highly civilized individual ; but, for reasons that I hope presently to make clear, it does not follow that the most highly civilized individuals have lived in the most highly civilized ages. On the contrary, it seems that the most highly civilized people in any century at all civilized should be more highly civilized than their counterparts in the preceding one, always provided that they have easy access to, and the means of enjoying, the legacies of the past. Because the middle ages could draw hardly at all on antiquity or make much use of the little they got, the most civilized man of the thirteenth century was infinitely less civilized than a cultivated Athenian or Roman even. Even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there was way to be made up, and I do not imagine that the most accomplished gentleman of the Renaissance would have cut a very good figure in the circle of Aspasia. But if the Renaissance was still making up leeway, it is certain, I think, that by the middle of the eighteenth

century there were men and women who outwent any of their predecessors in civility, chiefly, no doubt, because they had learnt so much from them. Nevertheless the highly civilized men and women of the eighteenth century, perhaps because they were a smaller proportion of the population, did not colour their age so richly and profoundly as did the civilized Athenians. Eighteenth-century civilization was inferior to Periclean ; yet I dare say no Athenian was as highly civilized as Voltaire. In his sense of humour, at any rate, the perfectly civilized man of the eighteenth century was distinctly subtler than the Athenian. Aristophanes, himself, was never so *fin* as Lafontaine (to begin at the beginning), as Gresset, Montesquieu, Marivaux, Voltaire, and Beaumarchais, or, for that matter, as Congreve, Pope, Goldsmith, Sterne, and Gibbon. What is more, in this matter of humour, in appreciation at any rate, the most civilized people of this present age perhaps outgo all others in subtlety : if this be so, I need not labour my point that one swallow does not make a summer.

In these last paragraphs, I perceive, I have been wandering by a back way into a subject which ought to be approached later

and with ceremony. A sense of humour, and cosmopolitanism too, are characteristics of a civilized person rather than of a civilized society ; and though I mean to prove that a civilized society is nothing but a society that has been coloured by a group of civilized people, I have not proved it yet. My immediate business is not to describe civilized men and women, but to discover characteristics common and peculiar to those three societies which I have taken as paragons. And as, for the moment, I have done with those characteristics which spring from a sense of values, I must turn now to those which can be traced to the enthronement of reason.

# V

## THEIR CHARACTERISTICS: REASON ENTHRONED

THE very heart of Athenian civilization—so think the historians—is to be found in that oration wherewith Pericles consoled his bereaved fellow-citizens by giving them an account of their own virtues. Historians, however, think wrong sometimes. The speech of Pericles is a fine performance suggesting a fine atmosphere: it could have been made only by a great man to men far above the modern average of thought and feeling. It would be equally out of place in the House of Commons or at a Trade Union Congress. But it is not to any speech or to any politician that I should go for a thing so subtle as the heart of civility. Of civilization, political speeches may be manifestations, as may be laws, hats, and cookery, but of its essence they cannot be: to discover the secret of Athens it would be wiser to explore the writings of Aristophanes,

Euripides, and Plato, and the tradition of the Sophists, than the speeches of Pericles, Isocrates, and Phocion. In the poets, philosophers, and historians, if anywhere, is to be found that saffron which at once flavours and colours Hellenic culture. I do not say that in them alone it existed or even that they were its chief propagators. On the contrary, I hope presently to show that the stream of civility springs from nameless wells and reservoirs—from a class in fact—though it flows down famous conduits ; that the disseminators of culture are a group of men and women of whom most create no tangible work and leave no eximious monument, though they diffuse the influence which manifests itself in the spirit of the age. At any rate, it is absurd to make of a politician the representative of a spiritual or intellectual movement. No one would judge Utilitarianism, that product of the minds of Adam Smith and Ricardo, of Bentham and the Mills, by the speeches of Mr. Hobhouse and Mr. Roebuck, of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright. Turgot and Necker even, great though they were, would give a miserably inadequate notion of the *philosophical* movement. The revival of learning and free thought in Northern

Europe was something very different from Luther's bawling propaganda and the opportunism of Frederick of Saxony and Henry VIII. Politicians, for their hour, loom as large as actors and jockeys and then, like them, fade from the public mind, and are known to curious erudition only.

'Alive ridiculous, and dead forgot.'

If the last part of the quotation be true, so must be the first: for what could be more ridiculous than one, doomed to speedy oblivion, giving himself the airs cabinet ministers are apt to assume? And, tell me, how many of your friends could tell you who was Prime Minister of England at the time of Waterloo, who was at the War Office, who was First Lord of the Admiralty. Of how many politicians alive and active in the year 1815 are the names familiar to the reading public? Of Canning perhaps, and Castlereagh (chiefly because he was the object of Byron's satire and Shelley's), and possibly of Grey. Does anyone but an avowed student of military history know the names of more than two of Wellington's generals? And who was in command of the British fleet when Napoleon came on board the *Bellerophon*? But if well-edu-

cated English men and women do not know the name of the Prime Minister who presumably 'won' the Napoleonic War, nor the names of his cabinet colleagues, nor of more than two of his soldiers, nor of a single one of his admirals, every second-class undergraduate can tell you that Shelley, Byron, Keats, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, Hazlitt, Scott, Moore, Rogers, and Jane Austen were writing at that time. And the explanation is simple : these are remembered because they have had, and have still, a real and direct effect on the minds of men ; because they are still creating, still stimulating new thoughts and feelings, still suggesting new points of view or changing old ones ; because they are even adding now to the world's store of good. Politicians, at best, do but manipulate and distribute the good things others have produced : never do they create. When they are remembered it is chiefly for the great and dramatic events with which their names are associated but of which they were not the cause ; and, as we have seen, great events even will not save them always. They belong, as a rule, to that third or fourth order which, though it may play a conspicuous, can never play a leading part in

the history of the race. Politicians leave scars and scratches on the disk, but they do not make the tune : they neither originate nor conclude nor greatly modify those more conscious impulses of the human mind which give shape to human history. It is a mistake, therefore, to expect them to be of those who create civilizations, though often they will be found significant manifestations of the civilizations of which they are parts.

So I shall not go to Pericles for the secret of Athenian civility, though I gladly accept him as a type of what Athenian civility could produce. And there is one passage in that speech of his on which I would dwell because it seems to express exactly what the Athenians felt about the first and most important of those civilized characteristics that spring from the enthronement of reason—Tolerance I mean. 'The spirit of freedom,' says Pericles, 'prevails alike in our public and private affairs. Without a scrap of jealousy we tolerate peculiarities of all sorts in each other's daily lives : we have no objection to our neighbour following the bent of his humour : nor do we put on black looks, innocuous maybe, but annoying.'[1] That kind of tolerance, one of the surest

[1] Thucydides, ii. 37.

indications of a high state of civilization, comes only of a belief in reason : good taste is not enough. A sense of values may lead by winding paths to a sense of the necessity for personal freedom ; but the one sure basis of toleration is a clear intellectual perception that reason alone has the right to constrain liberty. Only reason can convince us of those three fundamental truths without a recognition of which there can be no effective liberty : that what we believe is not necessarily true ; that what we like is not necessarily good ; and that all questions are open. Our sense of values ought to show us that to prevent anyone fully expressing himself is to impoverish life ; but only reason is strong enough to keep in hand that insatiable desire that lurks in us all to compel others to be like ourselves. Reason must be the sole judge : and reason will suffer us to limit other people's self-expression only in so far as it can be shown, *reasonably*, that such self-expression destroys more good than it creates.

The maximum of self-expression for all is what our sense of values makes us feel to be desirable. Wherefore, we must learn to tolerate not only other people's ideas but their ways of life too. It may be impos-

sible for society to bear with the man who can find complete satisfaction only in homicide and arson, but there can be no excuse for imprisoning people who merely hurt our feelings. Let me take an extreme case. To most normal men and women the idea of incest is disgusting and absurd. I share the popular prejudice. But there is something that shocks me far more than incest, and that is sending people to prison for it. Last night perhaps you were sitting in a club, playing bridge, smoking a cigar, and drinking whisky : observe that you were doing simultaneously three things which many excellent people consider extremely wrong. Does it not make you horribly uncomfortable to reflect that perhaps, a mile away, two lunatics were committing incest, and that you, as a citizen and voter, were invoking the whole power of the state to prevent and punish them ? What they were about in no way interfered with your complete self-expression, or with that of anyone else. They were expressing themselves in what seems to you a disgusting and ridiculous manner, and you were expressing yourself in a way that seems disgusting and ridiculous to many high-minded people. But if you do not admit the right of those

high-minded philanthropists, sitting in the cosy corners of their garden cities and enjoying a glass of barley-water and a sense of moral superiority, to tear you away from the bridge table and cast you into prison, with what conscience can you pay policemen and judges to interfere with the self-regarding activities of those unfortunate, and probably feeble-minded, lovers.

Let me say, at once, that the quarrel of the eugenists with these eccentrics, when not disingenuous, is perfectly respectable. To justify their interference, the eugenists invoke, not their prejudices, but the health of the community ; and I make no doubt they are clever enough to manœuvre statistics and history into helping them to get round the fact that inbreeding has been employed before now as a means of preserving the purity of a race.[1] But until they have succeeded in making illegal the begetting of children by drunkards, idiots, and consumptive and syphilitic persons, eugenists may as well leave in peace a handful of oddities who find happiness in what seems to us perversity.

[1] It has been maintained—I know not with what authority—that it was to this end some of the great Renaissance families affected incestuous relations.

The laws against incest are typical examples of gross intolerance.[1] Most of us feel a sharp physical reaction—something like a shudder—at the idea of connections of this sort ; and these reactions we are apt to mistake for profound ethical judgments. I know all about this feeling of disgust and disapprobation because I feel it, not only for incest and things of that sort, but for cheese. To me the sight of cheese is offensive, the smell shocking, the mere thought disturbing and vexatious : to see people eating it revolts my whole being to its depths and undermines my sense of human dignity. Yet reason tells me that the eating of cheese is no sin. Reason forbids me to mistake a physical reaction for a moral judgment, which is what every other part of my nature longs to do. Reason overrides prejudice. The essence of intolerance is the exalting of prejudices into principles, and the imposing of them on other people. The old gentleman, sitting to cards and whisky, and interfering, through the police, with the harmless eccentricities of his neighbours, the friend of humanity, nibbling his nuts,

[1] In Athens the marriage of half-brothers and sisters was allowed; so Lord Byron, at any rate, would have been respectable there.

and devising schemes of interference with the pleasures of that old gentleman, are alike the formidable and funest expression of man's ineradicable barbarism. Let us set up against them, as the motto of civility, the splendid boast of Athens :

> —ἐλευθέρως δὲ τά τε πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν πολιτεύομεν καὶ ἐς τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους τῶν καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ὑποψίαν, οὐ δι' ὀργῆς τὸν πέλας, εἰ καθ' ἡδονήν τι δρᾷ, ἔχοντες, οὐδὲ ἀζημίους μέν, λυπηρὰς δὲ τῇ ὄψει ἀχθηδόνας προστιθέμενοι.
>
> 'And not only in politics are we open-minded : without a scrap of jealousy we tolerate peculiarities of all sorts in each other's daily lives ; we have no objection to our neighbour following the bent of his humour ; nor do we put on black looks, innocuous maybe, but annoying.'

No good purpose can be served by telling me that the Athenians put Socrates to death. I am already aware of the fact. But if one swallow does not make a summer, neither do three dark days constitute winter. By the freedom of their thought and criticism, by their open-mindedness, curiosity, and taste for experiment, the Athenians set an example which the best of later ages have tried in vain to emulate. Towards Athens the finest Western minds turn ever for inspiration and

encouragement. Athens alone gives a semblance of possibility to their dreams of the ideal, for from Athens alone the heroic desire for truth and beauty did receive some sort of practical expression. The Athenians cared instinctively for Beauty and believed in Truth. And this belief gave them something better than a taste for freedom : it gave them a conviction of its absolute necessity. The Athenians had a State religion, not much encumbered with dogma, nor, after the middle of the fifth century, much believed in by the intelligent. It was a religion which seems to have hindered no one except Socrates and, for a moment, Anaxagoras from speculating freely. A formal respect for one or two ancient taboos they did require ; but the only morality of which law and public opinion took much account was practical morality. A citizen was required not to commit grossly anti-social acts. But by an anti-social act the Athenians did not mean anything the majority misliked or misunderstood : they had no objection to a neighbour following the bent of his humour. They tried to be tolerant.

When I say that the enthronement of reason is typical of a highly civilized society, you will not imagine that I suppose every

Athenian to have taken a strictly rational view of every question that came his way. You do not imagine that when Julius Caesar said that the Belgians were a brave race, he supposed that each individual Belgian was as bold as a lion. The French eighteenth century, to be sure, which was even more enamoured of Reason than the Hellenic fifth, does seem to have believed that it needed only a few constitutional changes to make all men happy and rational ; but we, of the twentieth, who have enjoyed the blessings of so many great reforms and glorious revolutions, are inevitably less sanguine. The Italians of the Renaissance did their best to break down the hideous intolerance of the middle ages : the measure of their success is the barbarity of the reaction. Remember, it was the considered opinion of the judicious Buckhardt that between the middle of the fifteenth century and the Spanish terror which brought in the counter-reformation such questions as that of the immortality of the soul were treated by all educated Italians as open. Of course, highly civilized ages have not all been equally tolerant ; only, all have struggled towards the light, feeling that the attempt to impose by force ways of thinking, feeling,

and living was ugly. They have realized, more or less clearly, that dogma is death. In so far as they have been superstitious, they have tended to keep their nonsense to themselves ; they have not much tried to impose it by force or by the threat of a moral sanction. Superstitious, with its stars and philtres, the Renaissance undoubtedly was, but much less so than the middle ages. Of Athenian citizens a great number were not superstitious at all, however it may have been with the mystery-mongering mob—the majority of whom were slaves. The French eighteenth century was not only sceptical, it recognized superstition for what it is—the inveterate enemy of what makes life precious. *Écrasez l'infâme.*

For superstition is a thing which comes between a man and his sense of reality, robbing him of that most intense and thrilling experience, which is the apprehnsion of reality. To realize truth, to see the thing in itself, these are experiences comparable with love and aesthetic ecstasy. But how is the watcher of the skies to get that thrill which comes of a new planet swimming into his ken when superstition compels him to believe that the sky is an inverted bowl, the stars chinks through

which peeps God, and that there are no such things as planets? As the lover who sees the beloved always through a cloud of romance will never know that supreme joy which comes from the complete realization of another human being, of another existence as real as his own, so he who contemplates the universe through the spectacles of superstition can never know the thrill that answers the recognition and passionate acceptance of the naked truth. Superstition cheats emotion of one of its finest stimulants; and, not content with that, by imposing bounds on the discursive intellect deprives us of our most delicate and subtle amusements. For the intellect, though it die not, grows fat and clumsy in captivity. All that makes conversation amusing and society brilliant—wit, irony, paradox, repartee, intellectual fooling, the intellect can give, provided the intellect be free. There must be no taboos, no closed subjects; for from the shackled intellect you will get nothing better than pompous disquisitions and practical jokes. The intellect must be free to handle, not only in earnest but in fun, all things in heaven and earth. It can range gloriously as an eagle; but, like an eagle, once maimed, mopes. All things

that are, or have been, or may be, are its appropriate toys. Superstition would put it to play with counters. And with these playing, within the precincts of dogma, the intellect grows blear-eyed and childish. There is an end of thrilling speculation and an end of intellectual refinement. Superstition robs life of half its glory and a good part of its fun. And because the eighteenth century knew this, the eighteenth century declared war on superstition.

People who are tolerant and not superstitious are unlikely to be very cruel, unless they happen to take that sadistic pleasure in cruelty for its own sake which is, at any rate, not more common amongst civilized than amongst savage people. Useless cruelty they are sure to dislike, and they will see that most cruelty is useless. Torture was forbidden by the laws and was repugnant to the spirit of the Athenian people who, when, as a body, they acted with unusual ferocity, had the grace, as a body, to be ashamed of themselves : such humility is, however, too rare to be reckoned a characteristic of civilization. The strident individualism of the Renaissance produced a gallery of supermen, few of whom quite escaped a smear of that peculiar disgusting-

ness which distinguishes the sect. They have left a record of some outrageous and purposeless brutalities over which the pale historian never fails to gloat ; but most of their crimes were severely practical. And if you remember—and I have invited you to remember—that these private crimes were often substitutes for war, you may begin to wonder whether it is for this age to throw the first stone at Renaissance politicians. The humanity of the French eighteenth century was such that the public was positively shocked when it discovered that Calas had been unjustly executed : also Voltaire did not die mysteriously in prison as he might have done in the twentieth. In the age of faith people would simply have been at a loss to understand what he was making so much fuss about : they would have burnt him none the less. Superstitious ages are inevitably cruel ; one of their superstitions being, invariably, that pain is good as a means, a doctrine which commends itself especially to those who are ashamed to confess that they deem it good as an end. After all, the sadism of civilized eccentrics may be nothing more than a relic of barbarism.

Reason will be tending ever to scrutinize

those barbarous instincts and memories which are at once the wells and shrines of prejudice. For prejudices spring either from physical reactions, as my prejudice against cheese does, or from the forgotten taboos of savage ancestors. To this day in Central Africa there are young ladies whose lives are made bitter by the recurring danger of seeing the moon over their left shoulders ; while others slink through the jungle in constant terror of coming on their aunt's second cousin unawares. It is as easy for a girl to lose her character in the Congo as in a cathedral town. We owe more than we think to our remote grandmothers. Sir Edmund Gosse has told us how grievously some years of his childhood were burdened with the conviction that he had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost ; and Mr. James Joyce, in that strange half-baked study of his, showed us, only the other day, that a mind still saturated in superstition can be tortured to madness almost by the recollection of having done what most boys do and thought what most boys think. There is no remedy, I admit, for that remorse which all sensitive people feel for the wanton unkindnesses they have done and the pleasures they have forgone :

but that sense of sin, from which so many well-meaning people still suffer, and for which they make so many others suffer, is, as a rule, nothing more than a remnant of barbarism which will yield to treatment. Curiosity, which grows stronger and stronger as men become more civilized, is the antidote.

Savages have their curiosity ; but it is a cramped and cabined thing. There are a certain number of facts only that they dare examine, and these they dare examine only in a certain way. It is not truth they want, but safety. Their curiosity is instinctive, not rational, and their fear-ridden brains cannot convert it to knowledge. But as no one denies that ignorance, in the common acceptation of the word, is a characteristic of barbarism, I need no more labour this point than I need demonstrate by instances the vivid curiosity of Periclean Athens, fifteenth-century Florence, or eighteenth-century France. Only on one consequence of this civilized curiosity must I insist : civilized people can talk about anything. For them no subject will be taboo so long as there is anything to say about it which seems interesting or gay. In civilized societies there will be no intellectual bogeys at sight of which great grown-up babies are expected

to hide their eyes. I shall have so much to say presently about the *Symposium* that here I will do no more than observe that from that inimitable picture of an ideal after-dinner conversation we can see that, in a company of educated Athenians, there were no closed subjects. Students of the *Decameron*—and the *Decameron* was for two centuries the favourite reading of men and women throughout the length and breadth of Italy—know that, in the ages of Petrarch, Cosimo dei Medici, and Michael Angelo, neither what are called 'the great facts of life' nor the most dignified institutions and sacred persons were considered unsuitable objects of bold and lively criticism. And to anyone who cares to know with what freedom ladies and gentlemen of the eighteenth century ranged over the universe of facts and ideas I will recommend Diderot's *Rêve de d'Alembert*, the second, and frankest, part of which is presented in the form of a monologue uttered by d'Alembert in his sleep, and written down by Mlle Lespinasse, while the third, and most startling, consists of an imaginary, but clearly not impossible, conversation between Mlle Lespinasse and M. Bordeu.

If it be a civilized society you want, the

intellect must be free to deal as it pleases with whatever comes its way, it must be free to choose its own terms, phrases, and images, and to play with all things what tricks it will. There must be not one Bluebeard's chamber ; for to bar the intellect from one room in the house is to hobble it in all the rest. That is why prudery is a dangerous enemy ; and it is not less dangerous because its pretentions are grotesque. What is seemly or unseemly in sentiment or expression is clearly a matter of taste. To my taste the sentiment of most of those songs which touch the heart of the people—'*Good-by-e-e*' or '*The heart stood still*'—is disgusting, and the expression vulgar. I would not, however, on that account have them suppressed by force. I recognize that my taste is different from that of my fellows : but I could never suppose that my distaste for what they like could be a reason for depriving them of their pleasures. I am reasonable enough to be tolerant ; and I would not wish to see vulgarity punished by law. In the reign of Queen Victoria the taste of the middle classes was offended by what had seemed interesting and amusing and beautiful to most of the great poets, artists, thinkers, and critics of other ages.

You might have thought that in what is admittedly a matter of taste the opinions of such people would have counted for something, would have given pause even to those curates and tradesmen who had discovered so suddenly and so exactly what was delicate and what was not. All I can say is, the curates and tradesmen were made of stouter stuff : they had no sort of doubt that Plato and Aristophanes and Sappho and Catullus and Lucretius and Dante and Boccaccio and Rabelais and Shakespeare and Milton and Lafontaine and Voltaire and Diderot and Pope and Swift and Fielding were rough and insensitive in those matters where they themselves could judge unerringly. What is more, the curates and tradesmen hold the field. No living author could print, in England, such things as were written by Plato, Dante, or Shakespeare. The law takes cognizance of breaches of good taste. Certainly it suffers what would have seemed insufferably vulgar to those great men whose works now need our apology ; for it suffers what Victorian gentility esteemed and the great public still loves. It suffers literature, plastic art, and music, freely displayed on bookstalls, in public galleries and in music-halls, which is an incessant humiliation to

any man or woman of taste ; it suffers the ideas of popular journalists and the emotions of popular playwrights ; it suffers even our public monuments, and puts up with Nurse Cavell ; in a word, it tolerates and patronizes an attitude towards life and art which Milton, with his smutty jokes, and Shakespeare, with his deplorable sonnets, would have supposed too shameful to be avowed by the lowest wretch. Let us not complain : everyone, even Sir Hall Caine and Mr. Ivor Novello, should be allowed to express himself as completely as possible. But let us hope that should good taste and power ever be united, that happy combination of forces will be too highly civilized to commend *The Doctor* and *The Rosary* and *Keep the home fires burning* to the flames.

All that can be hoped for, and all that is to be desired, in matters of taste is absolute toleration. Let us not complain of the Lord Chamberlain's preference for *Chu Chin Chow* to *Six Characters*, but only of his interfering with our enjoyment of the latter. It seems odd, I admit, that in questions so subtle and delicate as those of taste, any common police-court magistrate, county councillor, or bishop should be allowed to know better than the finest artist or the most

fastidious critic ; but, in my judgment, it would be as undesirable for the intelligent and sensitive to control the pleasures of the stupid and vulgar, as it is deplorable that the stupid and vulgar should control the pleasures of the sensitive and intelligent. Those admirable enthusiasts who bestir themselves from time to time to get questions asked in Parliament about the censorship of books and plays, and even complain when they find that politicians care not a rap for the interests of culture, go the wrong way to work. They should not insist on the aesthetic superiority of what they like, but on the general principle of toleration. They are up against a kind of vanity which is particularly virulent in this country and in America ; and if they are to circumvent it they must try, for once, to be as clever as they are good. The fact is, to make a judgment in a matter of taste requires a degree of sensibility higher than that with which the normal voter has been blessed. But repeatedly to be told this gives the normal voter no pleasure at all. It is quite true that the intellectual force and honesty required to judge any question whatever on its merits is such as to put all judgment beyond his reach. Yet on judging he is

bent : and that is why he accepts and enjoins mechanical standards. These standards are not, of course, standards of taste : for to taste mechanical standards cannot apply, taste being a matter of personal reaction and sensibility. But to people who have never known a first-hand, personal reaction, much less formed a judgment on one, they are serviceable. Also, a good mechanical standard, in the steady hand of stupidity and insensibility, has this immense advantage—it can be applied to anything. Relevancy ceases to exist ; once you have got into the habit of judging peaches by their weight you will find it delightfully easy to go on to books and pictures. The normal man loves a ready-made standard that is always ready and can be applied to anything. Just as he cannot know whether a work of art is beautiful, but can understand the evidence for thinking that it was not made by Raphael, so he cannot know whether a thing is vulgar—vulgarity being a matter of sentiment and expression—but can know whether certain definite words have been used and certain definite subjects mentioned. He has his standard, and he can apply it every morning and evening in his third- or first-class railway carriage. Prudery is

mechanical taste just as sanctimoniousness is mechanical religion. And just as no truly religious person is troubled by profanity, so no man of real taste objects to indecency. But these are not the arguments with which you will persuade the electors.

The way of Reason is not always smooth, but he who follows it honestly may be sure of overtaking one reward : he will lose the unreasonable fear of enjoying the good things of life. Reason may be trusted to hunt down those sport-spoiling, inhibitory bogeys that haunt the brains of barbarians. The frank enjoyment of all life has to offer is the privilege of the completely civilized. To enjoy perfectly a man must have cleansed himself from taboos ; he must be free from prudery, superstition, false shame, and the sense of sin. This reason alone can do for him : and his moral code must repose on that other pillar of civility—a sense of values. His sense of values will tell him that the pleasures offered by the senses, or by an alliance between sense and emotion, or by an alliance between sense and intellect, are not bad in themselves. It will tell him, rather, that pleasure, so far as it goes, is always good : it is for civilized intelligence never to allow it to become a means to bad

by hampering and making impossible greater good. For instance, no truly civilized person will think it wrong to get drunk ; but all civilized people despise a sot. A sot soon makes himself incapable of good states of mind, and a public nuisance to boot : but a gay supper-party is one of those things that no civilized person will refuse so long as he is in good health. Why, austere Plato himself held that it was a citizen's duty to get drunk at the Dionysia.[1] And a civilized man is not to be scared from pleasures by hearing them called bad names—corrupt, vicious, or shameful. As a rule, such epithets mean no more than that most people are frightened by the unexplored or ill-explored parts of human nature. Since pleasure is not bad in itself, there can be no reason for being ashamed of any pleasure : and if there are pleasures in which a civilized man decides not to indulge, it is not because they are bad, but because their consequences are. Assuredly, it is shameful to be such a slave to appetite that, reason dethroned, one loses the power of weighing the consequences. It is shameful to suffer an addiction to crude sensualities to benumb a capacity for subtler enjoyments and more

[1] *Leg.*, vi. 775.

thrilling experiences. A civilized man will be ashamed of unfitting himself for civilized enjoyments, of lowering his capacity for clear thought and fine feeling ; he will be ashamed of indulging any passion which cannot be indulged without violating his sense of values and dethroning reason ; and he will be ashamed of nothing else. Savages will call him shameless.

Since the study of Greek became part of a gentleman's education it has been to the majority of those who were paid to teach it a source of constant and painful surprise that no people were ever more fearless in enjoyment of life than the Athenians. Certainly they knew what shame was, seeing that they invented it. They invented it by bringing their sensibilities to a sharpness hitherto unknown. But the Athenians were not ashamed of their pleasures : also, they indulged in them pretty freely. They were ashamed of losing all self-control and making brutes or fools of themselves ; and they seem to have been haunted by remorse for acts of cruelty and violence. But so far were they from despising pleasure that Greek philosophy reckoned it an essential ingredient of the good life. Only, as no schoolmaster fails to tell his class when he

feels — as feel sometimes he must — the sharpness of clash between Greek and Hebrew ethics, the Athenians, above all pleasures, and indeed above all things, set the moderator, the harmonizer, Reason. It is a pity that the Italians of the Renaissance, who borrowed so much, could not have borrowed from Athens a little more of this σωφροσύνη, this sweet reasonableness. It is a pity that from their superb endowment the gift of temperance was somehow omitted. It is a pity that they could not better control their passion to enjoy—a pity, but nothing to my immediate purpose. Assuredly the men and women of the Renaissance were not afraid of the good things of life. They might dabble in astrology and black magic ; they made short work of those superstitions that came between them and their fun. They were shameless : if you don't believe me, read Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography. 'Since God has given us the Papacy let us enjoy it,' said Leo x., and he meant precisely what he said. His pleasures were those of a highly civilized man (a typical man of a typical age) ; they included an appreciation of art and letters, music and scholarship ; song was there, and so were women

and wine. And His Holiness was not ashamed.

That adorable eighteenth century got nearer again to the Greek ideal. Indeed, the charm of that charming age comes, more than of anything else perhaps, of its extreme reasonableness having been sweetened by an extraordinary sense of values. And that is the mixture, I am sure, which gives us high civility. The Italian Renaissance, because its instinctive aesthetic sense was tempered and fortified by a belief in reason more serious far than that which inspired the scholastic philosophers, achieved a civilization superior to anything which the middle ages could have conceived. And what gives the second part of the eighteenth century its peculiar deliciousness is that, while men, and women too, thought as vigorously and boldly on all subjects as men have ever thought, while they not only speculated but were prepared to see their ideas growing into actions, a sense of values enabled them to conduct their critical propaganda and subversive activities with the exquisite urbanity of an earlier generation. They believed so sincerely in pleasure that they thought even politics should be made agreeable. Economists were expected to

present their theories in a form acceptable to fine ladies ; but, remember, to be fine, a lady was almost obliged to take an interest in theories. The serious discussion of fundamental questions, thought these amiable and courageous people, was not incompatible with good temper and humanity. And the century which produced Voltaire, Gibbon, Hume, and two philosophical popes, had not only the intellectual honesty of radicals, but the indulgence of sceptics and the manners of ladies and gentlemen. Such a combination will always appear attractive ; and particularly so to an age unfortunate enough to suffer from revolutionaries who have neither wits nor manners and reactionaries who have neither manners nor wits.

In the eighteenth century it was Reason that was expected to keep things sweet by purging the passions of grossness and savagery. Pleasure, reasonable pleasure, was the end of an honest man's desire. It was the eighteenth century that made it the touchstone in political discussions, trying systems and projects of government by the extent to which they might be expected to increase happiness. It was the eighteenth century which found the romantic past sadly

to seek in this commodity, and was more impressed by the abject misery of the eleventh century than by the glamour of the first crusade. And, in the eighteenth century, for the first time since the end of the ancient world, was elaborated and expounded in able if not very learned tomes a philosophy of pleasure, a philosophy of which the essence may be culled most agreeably from the stories and miscellaneous writings of Voltaire. For example :

> '. . . tout le monde avouait que les dieux n'avaient établi les rois que pour donner tous les jours des fêtes, pourvu qu'elles fussent diversifiées ; que la vie est trop courte pour en user autrement ; que les procès, les intrigues, la guerre, les disputes des prêtres, qui consument la vie humaine, sont des choses absurdes et horribles ; que l'homme n'est né que pour la joie ; qu'il n'aimerait pas les plaisirs passionnément et continuellement, s'il n'était pas formé pour eux ; que l'essence de la nature humaine est de se réjouir, et que tout le reste est folie. Cette excellente morale n'a jamais été démentie que par les faits.'

And you must not suppose that the eighteenth century elaborated a philosophy for the benefit of one class only. On the contrary, its conception of progress consisted

in the gradual extension to all of the means of enjoyment, of the means, let us say, of fulfilling their natures, since 'l'essence de la nature humaine est de se réjouir.' In the eighteenth century this philosophy of pleasure, under its old-world name of Philanthropy, was extremely popular. To-day it is disdained as deficient in idealism, since it aims at the satisfaction of the individual rather than at the glorification of a race, a creed, or a class. It is as much detested by patriots as despised by communists, and only a few old-fashioned people still believe that there may be something to be said for it.

Seeing that it has for long been the opinion of those whose opinions are generally taken seriously that Athens towards the end of the fifth century brought civilization to a pitch of intensity which has never been equalled, it would not be amiss, I think, to wind up this chapter with an examination of what is allowed to be the best picture of Athenian society at its best. If Plato's *Symposium* has been held, not only by poets, scholars, and artists, but by bishops, judges, and cultivated tradesmen, not only by pagan philosophers but by the Fathers of the Church, to have been one of the most beautiful and

moving compositions that ever issued from the mind of man, that is not more on account of the radiant ideas that shine clearly through the web of Socrates's rather over-sophistic speech than of the exquisite picture given of an exquisite way of life. In this lovely dialogue we catch a glimpse, and something more, of a civilization which seems to come nearer the heart's desire than anything less favoured ages have conceived possible. Still about this picture of a way of life hangs the air of an instant in the ideal caught by an artist and immortalized. And, remember, the picture is not the ecstatic vision of a rapt saint, no plan of some celestial paradigm, inaccessible to imperfection, but the record of a life that once was lived by mortal men and might by men be lived again.

The story is told by one Apollodorus who had it from Aristodemus, an atheist, Xenophon says, a little fellow who always went about without sandals, a rather insignificant member of that set of which Socrates, Agathon, Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, and Alcibiades were the stars. Here we have them all collected at an intimate dinner-party given by Agathon to celebrate his success in the contest of tragic poets. The previous day had been devoted

to public congratulations and 'a crush'; pretty good evidence, it seems, of the seriousness with which the arts were taken at Athens. On his way to this party Socrates, dressed up uncommonly fine, is met by Aristodemus, who naturally seeks the cause of this unwonted grandeur. 'Why I am off to dinner with Agathon,' says he (adding, what is probably a distortion of the Euripidean line, '*καλῶς ἴοιμι παρὰ καλὸν καλούμενος*'), and 'I am handsome that I may go handsomely to a handsome man'—'*ταῦτα δὴ ἐκαλλωπισάμην, ἵνα καλὸς παρὰ καλὸν ἴω.*' Socrates, who by common consent was the ugliest and shabbiest fellow in Athens, suggests that Aristodemus should come along with him. Aristodemus demurs, as being unbidden; but Socrates insists, knowing that hospitality and good-fellowship are virtues not peculiar to savages. Having insisted successfully, he (Socrates) lags behind in meditation, so that his embarrassed companion arrives alone, and has to be put at his ease by Agathon, who says that he has been looking for him all day long, anxious to have him but unable to find him.

The guests arrive. Agathon, who, besides being a tragic poet, was reputed as charming as he was gifted, and as beautiful

as he was either, declines to play the host and, turning to the servants, says—'Pray, consider us all your guests and treat us accordingly.' Late and last in comes Socrates, refusing to sit, or rather lie, till he has enjoyed a bout of what I can only describe as 'flirtatious irony' with Agathon—irony which, I need hardly say, is taken in excellent part—after which the whole company dines. Let us glance at it for a moment. Here, amongst others, are two poets, Agathon and Aristophanes, a doctor Eryximachus, that hard-up, out-at-elbows, street-corner preacher, Socrates, and, later, Alcibiades, a well-bred, popular politician, a dandy, and the richest man in Athens. Here were Phaedrus and Pausanias; and here were others of whom Aristodemus makes no mention, for he does not profess to give a complete list of names or a record of all the speeches. And amongst these others may have been craftsmen and casual labourers and sophists, who were little better than vagabonds, but amongst them, we may be sure, was no one who devoted the best part of his life to making money. Time, which, according to modern business men, is money, was, according to Socrates, made for slaves. It never occurred to an Athenian

that anyone could voluntarily subject himself to that discipline which is the life of the money-maker, of those who live to work. To be completely civilized, thought the Athenians, a man must be free from material cares. And as he must have ample leisure in which to enjoy whatever good things the intellect, the emotions or the senses put before him, there must be slaves. And because these lived to produce rather than to enjoy, because, lacking culture and leisure, they were incapable of thinking freely and feeling finely, they were inferiors. Between citizens equality was absolute. Differences of intelligence and education which are, unfortunately no doubt, real bars to pleasant and easy intercourse were the only differences recognized at Athens. Amongst citizens there were no class distinctions. In Athens there were no snobs.

Dinner over, the question is raised by Pausanias, shall they have a carouse, get drunk, and keep the flute-player, or shall they have conversation and send her away 'to play to herself or, if she will, to the servants within?' We are on the threshold of what is admittedly one of the most sublime arguments in human record: mark well the attitude of those about to hold it.

Reason makes them unafraid of the good things of life ; they are not ashamed of enjoying, even to what is called excess, such pleasures as wine and flute-girls can afford : but they are neither sots nor lechers ; and a sense of values, strengthened somewhat by the recollection of an overnight carouse, induces them to choose, on this occasion, the more exquisite pleasure of serious discussion. Not so serious, though, but what they can take it playfully. There is plenty of intellectual and some physical ragging, there are little disputes as to who is to sit next whom, there is personal banter, there is fun, there is downright teasing. Very early in the argument, it being the turn of Aristophanes to speak, he complains of the hiccups and claims that Eryximachus, the doctor, shall either take his turn or cure his disease. Eryximachus immediately offers to do both, and prescribes a ridiculous but most effective remedy. Highly civilized people are rarely solemn.

Everyone knows what was the theme of this most famous argument : Love. Not everyone realizes that, not to invalidate their conclusions by limiting their premises, the disputants excluded from discussion no aspect of the subject. They spoke of love

in its most admired and respectable forms ; also they had much to say in praise of a form for which in England people are sent to prison. To this form my instinctive reaction resembles that of the bulk of my fellows ; it is one of amazement and slight disgust. But I am not such a conceited fool as to trust my reactions blindly against the sentiment and considered opinion of some of the wisest and best of mankind. I think of those misguided and shocking people who eat cheese, and I try not to be silly. Whether my taste or that of Socrates and his friends be the better I cannot pretend to decide ; but I can listen respectfully to the arguments of my awe-inspiring opponents, I can refrain from passing off my physical reactions as moral indignation, and I can protest with all my heart against treating what has seemed good to many great men as a crime. No one has a right to call himself civilized who cannot listen to both sides of an argument ; and he is no better than a brute who cannot tolerate many things which to him, personally, are distasteful.

It is not my intention to discuss the *Symposium* save in so far as it throws light on my subject. I may note the genuine desire for truth underlying all the speeches,

and the sense of values which causes each speaker to present his case as beautifully as he can. Not even Socrates argues for victory : no one is unwilling to surrender an untenable position. Phaedrus speaks earnestly ; Pausanius is a trifle sententious ; Eryximachus is professional. The doctor, however, unlike the majority of his confrères, is not afraid of facing the inferences of his science, and points out, with admirable sense, that we should submit ourselves to the Pandemian Venus (Lust), ' only so far as to derive pleasure from it without indulging to excess, in the same manner as, according to our art, we are instructed to seek the pleasures of the table, only so far as we can enjoy them without the consequences of disease ' (Shelley's translation). And then there is the speech of Aristophanes, which is, I suppose, about as brilliant as a speech can be. With a delicious air of intellectual fooling it leads by unexpected and exquisitely comic ways to a serious conclusion, indicated rather than established, and smothered at birth—it is the moment to take risks with metaphors—in motley swaddling clothes. I take note of an irreverent tumbling of the gods which proves pretty clearly that these civilized people had run through the current

superstitions. I regret to say the speech is not free from smutty jokes ; but then we agreed that a willingness to talk and laugh about everything is a characteristic of civilized people. And I fancy few lovers, even the most ethereal and the most genteel, will take exception to this account of their state. ' These (those who have discovered their lost halves) are they who devote their whole lives to each other, with a vain and inexpressible longing to obtain from each other something they know not what ; for it is not merely the sensual delights of their intercourse for the sake of which they dedicate themselves to each other with such serious affection, but the soul of each manifestly thirsts for, from the other, something which there are no words to describe, and divines that which it seeks, and traces obscurely the footsteps of its obscure desire ' (Shelley).[1] To be

[1] Shelley's translation, or paraphrase rather, of the *Symposium* is very pretty so far as it goes. Unluckily it goes a very short way. For a good part of what he has written, even when it expresses most beautifully the spirit of the dialogue, no warrant is to be found in the text. More important is the complete omission of some of the most significant parts of the argument. It has been said that these lacunae are due, not to the poet, but to that odious and unscrupulous prude who became his second wife and unfortunately survived him ; but on this point in literary history I want the erudition that would entitle me to express an opinion.

sure, in the very next paragraph he falls back into ribaldry, arguing that if we are not extremely attentive to the gods, it is to be feared that Zeus will chop us in two again (his theory of love being that we have once already been so divided, and that the halves are ever seeking to reunite), and then, says he, we shall have to go about, like the figures that artists paint on columns, with our noses split down the middle, to say nothing of having to hop on one leg. This civilized habit of not being solemn when one is serious is very perplexing.

Agathon's speech is lyrical, lovely, and eloquent. He begins by saying that it is one thing to address the multitude in the theatre and quite another to appeal to a really critical audience. 'Surely, Socrates,' he says, 'you don't suppose me so blown up with my theatrical triumphs as not to know that to a person of any sense a few competent critics are more formidable than all the men in the street.' To me this remark seems to indicate a sense of values. To Socrates it gave an opening for a little sophistry and flirtation, to which, however, Phaedrus puts a stop by saying—'My dear Agathon, if once you get into an argument with Socrates there will be no end to it, for he will go on

wrangling for ever about anything with anyone—or, at any rate, with anyone who is sufficiently good looking. To be sure, it is always a pleasure to hear him talk, but to-night I must see to it that Love (our chosen topic) is not defrauded.' So Agathon proceeds ; and asserts, amongst other things, that Love can make a poet of any man, citing, in support, some part of a distich of his own which betrays the influence of Euripides :

> *πᾶς γοῦν ποιητὴς γίγνεται, 'κἂν ἄμουσος ᾖ τὸ πρίν,' οὗ ἂν Ἔρως ἅψηται.*
>
> No matter how prosaic formerly a man is touched to poetry by Love.

This gives Socrates, a little later, the chance of poking fun at Agathon's master, whom he did not love. After all the fine things Agathon has said, protests Socrates, it will be impossible for him to keep his promise. 'Such praise I do not understand; and in ignorance I agreed to compose a panegyric' :

> But my tongue only promised, not my mind
> (*ἡ γλῶσσα οὖν ὑπέσχετο, ἡ δὲ φρὴν οὔ*),

exclaims he, in the high Euripidean fashion. And then, just raising an eyebrow at Aga-

thon's coloured style, he begins his famous discourse on the nature of love. The speech is marvellous, though a little sophistic for my taste : perhaps it is worth noting, as a symptom of civility, that, at its most intense moment, the speaker gets in a gay gibe at the fopperies of the professional sophists, his enemies. As he ends, in bursts Alcibiades, extremely drunk, followed by flute-players. He comes to crown Agathon, which done, he will stay if they are for drinking, and go if they are not. They keep him, of course. True philosophers make the best of both worlds.

So they set to drinking, chaffing each other very cleverly about their love-affairs, and showing an exquisite superiority to that hardest dying of all barbarous passions—jealousy. And now, says Eryximachus, is this fair ? Is it just that Alcibiades should drink with us without contributing to our entertainment ? Let him, too, speak in praise of Love. It is as much as my skin is worth, says Alcibiades, to praise anything in the presence of Socrates but Socrates. Very well then, is the reply, Socrates you shall praise. And here comes the speech that so profoundly troubled Dr. Jowett. Alcibiades recounts, with some particularity,

the story of his fruitless passion for Socrates, while Socrates sits by, smiling blandly one imagines. Alcibiades was certainly not ashamed of his feelings ; and as he does not fail to see that they will appear slightly comic to his friends, as he does not make the mistake of taking himself too seriously, nothing in his confession seems to the company shocking or unpleasant. He is frank, amusing, and shameless. Not quite shameless, though ; he feels shame enough when Socrates convicts him of pursuing popular applause rather than truth and beauty. Here, at last, we have something that does appear disgraceful to a civilized man. Alcibiades concludes his tale of woe by imploring Agathon not to fall in love with Socrates lest he should suffer a like fate ; but here Socrates is waiting for him and declares that from the first he foresaw that this eulogy was nothing but a cunning device for putting him wrong with Agathon. In putting it right, the three,[1] who are sitting together, get up a pretty scrimmage as to who is now to praise whom, and who is to sit next whom, which is interrupted by the influx of a crowd of uninvited revellers, ' and the whole place

[1] The custom was that two only sat on one κλίνη ; for three to do so was in itself a provocation.

being thrown into an uproar, order went by the board, and everyone felt bound to drink furiously.' (*καὶ θορύβου μεστὰ πάντα εἶναι, καὶ οὐκέτι ἐν κόσμῳ οὐδενὶ ἀναγκάζεσθαι πίνειν πάμπολυν οἶνον.*)

That feast of reason which has been the wonder and admiration of twenty-three centuries ended, I am sorry to say, in what a London police-court magistrate would call 'a disgraceful orgy.' The professional Eryximachus and the earnest Phaedrus were the first to totter home: Aristodemus, for his part, fell asleep where he was. He slept a good while; it was winter and the nights were long. At daybreak he awoke: most of the guests were asleep—it seemed quite natural to eminent Athenians to curl up in their cloaks and sleep on the dining-room floor—but he noticed that Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates were still awake, drinking out of a great bowl, and talking. So far as Aristodemus could make out, Socrates was compelling the others to admit that tragedy and comedy are essentially identical; but being drowsy and still rather drunk he was none too sure how the argument went. Only he was certain that Aristophanes first began

to doze and then dropped off, and that when it was full day Agathon followed suit : 'having tucked them both up, Socrates (followed by Aristodemus) walked to the Lyceum, where, as usual, he took his bath ; the day he spent at work, and in the evening he went home to bed.'

# VI

## CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISSEMINATORS

I HAVE not yet defined civilization ; but perhaps I have made definition superfluous. Anyone, I fancy, who has done me the honour of reading so far will by now understand pretty well what I mean. Civilization is a characteristic of societies. In its crudest form it is the characteristic which differentiates what anthropologists call ' advanced ' from what they call ' low ' or ' backward ' societies. So soon as savages begin to apply reason to instinct, so soon as they acquire a rudimentary sense of values—so soon, that is, as they begin to distinguish between ends and means, or between direct means to good and remote—they have taken the first step upward. The first step towards civilization is the correcting of instinct by reason : the second, the deliberate rejection of immediate satisfactions with a view to obtaining subtler. The hungry

savage, when he catches a rabbit, eats it there and then, or instinctively takes it home, as a fox might, to be eaten raw by his cubs ; the first who, all hungry though he was, took it home and cooked it was on the road to Athens. He was a pioneer, who with equal justice may be described as the first decadent. The fact is significant. Civilization is something artificial and unnatural. Progress and Decadence are interchangeable terms. All who have added to human knowledge and sensibility, and most of those even who have merely increased material comfort, have been hailed by contemporaries capable of profiting by their discoveries as benefactors, and denounced by all whom age, stupidity, or jealousy rendered incapable, as degenerates. It is silly to quarrel about words : let us agree that the habit of cooking one's victuals may with equal propriety be considered a step towards civilization or a falling away from the primitive perfection of the upstanding ape.

From these primary qualities, Reasonableness and a Sense of Values, may spring a host of secondaries : a taste for truth and beauty, tolerance, intellectual honesty, fastidiousness, a sense of humour, good

manners, curiosity, a dislike of vulgarity, brutality, and over-emphasis, freedom from superstition and prudery, a fearless acceptance of the good things of life, a desire for complete self-expression and for a liberal education, a contempt for utilitarianism and philistinism, in two words—sweetness and light. Not all societies that struggle out of barbarism grasp all or even most of these, and fewer still grasp any of them firmly. That is why we find a considerable number of civilized societies and very few highly civilized, for only by grasping a good handful of civilized qualities and holding them tight does a society become that.

But can an entity so vague as a society be said to have or to hold qualities so subtle? Only in the vaguest sense. Societies express themselves in certain more or less permanent and more or less legible forms which become for anthropologists and historians monuments of their civility. They express themselves in manners, customs and conventions, in laws and in social and economic organization, above all, in the literature, science and art they have appreciated and encouraged: less surely they tell us something about themselves through the

literature, science and art, which they may or may not have appreciated, but which was created by artists and thinkers whom they produced. All these taken together may be reckoned—none too confidently—to compose a legible symbol of a prevailing attitude to life. And it is this attitude, made manifest in these more or less public and permanent forms, which we call civilization.

Civilization, if I may risk a not easily defensible metaphor, is the flavour given to the self-expression of an age or society by a mental attitude : it is the colour given to social manifestations by a peculiar and prevailing point of view. Whence comes this colouring view of life, this flavouring attitude ? From individuals of course ; since, as far as we know, individuals alone have minds to strike attitudes or select viewpoints. Past question the individual mind is the fount and origin of civility ; but one human mind is a drop of sweetness in the ocean, a speck of cochineal on the shore. One civilized human being will not make a civilization. Possibly, during the last three thousand years the world has never been without civilized inhabitants : in the darkest ages, though not, of course, amongst utterly barbarous and primitive tribes, it is likely

enough that one or two existed. In Western Europe of the tenth century—and one can hardly go lower without falling amongst Veddahs and Bushmen—we come across Gerbert looking oddly like a civilized man ; and the emperor Otho III., who may have been merely a prig, may on the contrary have been another. We cannot be sure than in the eighth century even there did not lurk unknown in quiet monasteries men who would not have been out of place at the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent. One swallow does not, and cannot, make a summer. It is only when there come together enough civilized individuals to form a nucleus from which light can radiate, and sweetness ooze, that a civilization becomes possible. The disseminators of civilization are therefore highly civilized men and women forming groups sufficiently influential to affect larger groups, and ultimately whole communities. A group of the civilized becomes civilizing when, and only when, it can so influence the community in which it exists that this community, tinted with its peculiar graces, begins to manifest them in ways of thinking and feeling. A civilized nucleus becomes civilizing when it is sufficiently numerous and power-

ful to colour the mass. And 'a civilized nucleus' is merely a definite looking name for an indefinite number of highly civilized men and women. These men and women are the creators and disseminators, the *sine qua non*, of civility.

It is in the mind of man that we must seek the cause and origin of civilization. Not laws nor customs nor morals nor institutions nor mechanical contrivances, as we discovered from a glance at savage communities and the British colonies, can create it: such things cannot make because they are made by men. It is the mind, the individual mind, which conceives, creates, and carries out. It is the influence of a number of minds, thinking and feeling sympathetically, which fashions, unconsciously and unintentionally as a rule, societies and ages. And so, at last, we are come to something precise—the civilized human being. Him or her we shall expect to find endowed in a finer, subtler, surer way with those qualities we noted as characteristic of civilized societies. The thoroughly civilized person will be willing at any moment to follow intellect into the oddest holes and corners, while his instinctive reaction to life will be ever conditioned by taste. Life for

him or her will not be altogether a matter of necessity ; to some extent it will be a matter of choice. His rabbit caught, he will have the self-restraint to decide how, where and when it shall be eaten. Essentially the civilized man is artificial. It is artificial to clean one's teeth and say 'please' and 'thank you.' It is unnatural not to knock down a weaker person with whom one is angry. But do not suspect me of trying to prove that the civilized man is the good man. The best man—if good mean anything—will be he who is capable of the best states of mind and enjoys them longest. It is amongst artists, philosophers, and mystics, with their intense and interminable ecstasies of contemplation and creation, that we must look for our saints. Reason will assure the civilized that here is the best, though a perverted taste may whisper that the best lacks variety. There are so many good things falling just short of it to be enjoyed. But perfection admits of no inferior ingredient. The ideal is an instant of perfection made infinite—the best of the best for ever. It is always high noon in Heaven. Yet a man may be exquisitely civilized notwithstanding that he loves the evening shades and starlit nights, to say nothing of the rain and snow

that make his fire burn brighter. The ideal is something permanent and unique ; and in the unmitigated beatitude of Heaven I do not know but that a very highly civilized person might find himself occasionally ill at ease.

Mind, I am not saying that an artist, a philosopher, or a mystic cannot be highly civilized, I am saying that a completely civilized person will not be of the single-eyed sort. Neither St. Francis, nor Dante, nor Blake, nor Cézanne, nor Dostoievsky was completely civilized, nor, given his work and all its implications, could he have been. Even Plato, once he gets on his high horse, as he does in the *Republic*, takes leave of his sense of values. A highly civilized man is too widely appreciative—and notoriously many-sidedness has its defects as well as its graces—to lose often or for long in an 'O Altitudo' his sense of everything but the moment. He is an appreciator above all things. He gains in breadth and diversity but loses in intensity, and intensity according to the philosophers is best. Should he happen to be an artist it will be, I suppose, that part of him which is not feverishly intent on self-expression—self-expression which comes perilously near self-assertion—

which will be most highly civilized. (And yet, precisely this civilized appreciativeness, this cultivated habit of self-criticism, what works of art have they not given us, from Horace, Pope, Mérimée, Milton even, Mantegna, Poussin, Wren, etc., etc., etc.) Anyhow, the civilized man will be highly susceptible to aesthetic impressions, and to aesthetic impressions not of one sort only. He will be eclectic. He will be discriminatingly appreciative and ever open to new aesthetic experiences. And yet, all regardful of beauty, truth, and knowledge, as he must be, filled with gratitude and a natural respect for the triumphant expressions of the spirit, he will inevitably feel more acutely than professional artists, thinkers, and savants are apt to feel, that there are other things in life meriting a perhaps not less eager pursuit.

If his intellectuality is not passionate enough to make of him a devoted philosopher or savant, it will make him aware at any rate of the importance of thought and knowledge as means to desirable states of mind and to self-development. Wherefore the highly civilized man will prize above most things education. For him its unassayable virtue lies in this : education

unlocks the door to the world of his desires. Education and sensibility are the most precious implements of the intelligent pleasure-seeker. The man of sensibility but of no education, the man who therefore cannot relate his personal experience to the past, the future, or the forces of nature, who cannot investigate the causes and consequences of his own ideas and feelings or dally with their analogies, is as one who has swilled choice wine all his life without ever lingering over the flavour, relishing the bouquet or smiling at the colour. Without education, be he never so sensitive, a man must stay in the forecourt of experience ; he wants the key to the inner palace of pleasures. Every thought and every feeling has overtones inaudible to the uneducated ear : to toy with each as it arises, to recognize the most unexpected implications in the most unlikely places, to see every question from a dozen different angles, to see oneself in other circumstances, to feel oneself at once heir of all the ages and a poor player who struts and frets his hour, to understand why Dr. Johnson is a credit to the race and a ridiculous old donkey to boot, such are the pleasures which education, and education alone, can procure :

believe me, they are the champagne and caviare of the spiritual life, and more delicious even than their material counterparts.

Education is our sixth sense. As for that technical instruction which is sometimes called education, it has nothing to do with what we are talking about. It has its importance ; it is well that boys should be taught how to get the greatest possible amount of milk out of six cows, and that girls should learn book-keeping. Such knowledge is a means to good, and a means to civilization as well. It is a remote means, however. For the rest, it is confusing to honour the inculcation of what is merely a means to 'getting on' with the name of 'education' which is a 'drawing out'—the drawing out of our subtlest and most delicate powers. It is wrong philosophically, I know, to describe this liberal education as the pursuit of knowledge as an end. Knowledge, as we have seen, is sought, not as an end, but as a means to valuable states of mind : knowledge in itself is worthless. Yet the common saying that the purpose of a liberal education is the stimulation of disinterested curiosity is not amiss ; for by it is understood to be meant that a liberal education will not help anyone to 'get on'

or 'make good'—in precise English, to make money—but to understand life and enjoy its finer pleasures.

At this time of day a civilized person, male or female, should be unshockable. Barbarism dies hard; and if History, with its record of what the best and wisest have thought and felt, of the tyranny, the imbecility, of the taboo, and Science, with its picture of man as a tangle of sub-conscious reactions, have not enabled us in this twentieth century to distinguish between an ethical judgment and a physical jib, blame not Reason. Against stupidity the very gods are said to fight in vain. Being shocked means that reason has been dethroned. Prudery, like fear, comes between a man and his impartial judgment, pulls this way and that, and perplexes the issue. Artillery officers have told me that the moment an observer loses his nerve (textually 'gets rattled'), he is powerless to direct accurately his gun, or to judge of its effect on the enemy. Fear takes charge, and plays what tricks it will, perverting judgment to its own uses. Prudery has a like effect. Had anatomists been so disgusted by the sight of a dead human body that, averting their eyes, they had refused

to proceed with their dissections, we should to this day be in a state of complete biological ignorance. And how should those who refuse to consider and, if possible, understand disagreeable, that is unfamiliar, tastes, habits, and tendencies, physical and emotional extravagances—how should they, starting away, screaming, 'I am shocked, I am shocked,' ever come to know anything of psychology or ethics? The causes and consequences of what distresses them they will not examine. They never see, steadily and whole, the thing itself, because some physical qualm or hard-dying taboo—which they are pleased to call 'moral indignation' or a 'sense of decency'—surges up and blinds them. They cannot touch a snake, it gives them the creeps. So it may; so much the worse for them: but do not let them make a virtue of a physical disability, or condemn snakes and snake-students on that account. But they are quite 'upset.' Indeed they are; the word is well chosen since reason is overthrown. And they know that snakes are 'horrid,' though zoologists assure them that they are beautiful and interesting. This prudery, unlike fear, which is often a means to self-preservation, and may well be founded on reason,

springs wholly from superstition when it is not a mere physical qualm. It is a curse without compensation. We cannot wish entirely to eliminate fear : but if we could rid ourselves of prudery we should be better off in a thousand ways and worse off in none.

The completely civilized man is above prudery : also, because he desires to come at truth he will try to put himself above rage and prejudice, which have the same inhibitory effect. A civilized man will be tolerant and liberal, which is not to say he will never show temper or stick his toes in. Only, just as he discovered that by putting the padlock of prejudice on any door of the mind inevitably he turned away some of its most charming visitors, so he will learn that there are very very few cases of anger which will not yield to intelligent treatment. As surely as a meek answer turneth away wrath does a sense of humour deflate tantrums. A civilized man will be liberal and tolerant.

Surely no one imagines that when I say 'liberal' I am thinking of politics. There is no knowing what the political opinions of a civilized man will be. This alone is certain, they will be the logical consequence

of some clear notion of what he really wants. What he wants may be absolute good, or merely to secure so far as possible his own comfort. Either is an intelligible object, and either, clearly perceived and genuinely desired, will prevent him attaching the least importance to those stunning phrases with which professional politicians make play. Liberty, Justice, Equality, Fraternity, Sanctities, Rights, Duties, Honour, all these expensive vocables may mean anything or nothing. To say that you are in favour of the Trade Union Bill because it is just is as senseless as to say that you are in favour of it because it is unjust. Justice is not an end in itself : a world that was entirely just and nothing else would be as insignificant as a world that was entirely unjust and nothing else. To be in favour of the Bill because it is a remote means to absolute good is a bold saying but a respectable position (the conclusion stands on valid premises and has only to be shown to have been logically drawn); similarly, to oppose the Bill because you think that in the long run it will diminish your wages is a perfectly good reason for opposing : but to support it because it is just, or oppose it because it is iniquitous, is to support or oppose it for no valid reason,

or for no reason at all. The only question a civilized man will ask about a political measure is, 'Is it a means to what I want, or does it make against what I want?' No one wants justice or equity in the void; these things, if desired at all, are desired as means, and the civilized man will ask himself—means to what? Of course it may happen that you and I, both desiring the same end, differ as to whether a particular Act of Parliament will be a means to that end. Here will be room for argument and explanation. Still more probably what is a means to what a man with four pounds a week wants will not be a means to what is desired by a man with ten thousand a year. Here, since the measure proposed is judged by different criteria, ultimate agreement is out of the question and compromise is the best that can be hoped for. But in such a case for either side to invoke such catchwords as 'rights' and 'duties,' or to accuse the other of immorality is about as sensible as it would be for an Oxford batsman to denounce the Cambridge bowler who got him out. The aims of the two parties are reasonable but different, and there is no occasion for hard names. That occasion arises when people desiring the end that

we desire employ means manifestly destined in the long run to defeat it : them we call stupid not wicked. Moral censure would be admissible in political controversy only if we could get everyone agreed as to what is good as an end, which might be possible, and further, as to what political measures are means to that end, which will not be easy. Is my having an additional fifty pounds a year likely, in the very longest run, to produce more absolute good—more valuable states of mind—than the provision of sand-heaps and waste-paper bins in the playgrounds of St. Pancras ? It is a nice question ; and one on which, as you will see if you read to the end of my book, I have a quite definite opinion. But, as you will also see, I have not much hope of getting everyone to agree with me. Mindful of all these things, a thoroughly civilized person, though deeply concerned about politics, will neither appeal to those grand old principles which are nothing to the purpose, nor deem his natural desire to hold what he has more meritorious than the desire of his opponent to get it for himself. He will not deceive himself with words and phrases. A civilized millionaire will not really believe that his objection to the present Russian govern-

ment is that it has made strikes illegal; and Mr. Lansbury, were he civilized, would not in his heart believe that his constituents have any more 'right' to a living wage than the Duke of Northumberland has to his fortune. Incidentally, this inability to suppose that any man's private hopes or fears are identical with absolute good makes it unlikely that a highly civilized man will often find his way into a popularly elected assembly.

Tolerant and unwilling to interfere, a civilized man will have manners. His sense of values would convince him of their importance as amenities even were reason not there to tell him that they are essential to knowledge. If to understand all be to pardon all, to pardon all is half-way to understanding. Put a man at his ease by good manners and address, and you are on the road to establishing sympathetic relations, you have made it easy for him to give his best; put up those barriers which manners were made to throw down, thrust between yourself and him suspicion, irritability, combativeness and self-assertion, and be sure that you will get nothing better than you give. Never to the overbearing and underbred are we tempted to betray our dearest secrets.

That is why the cad, the bounder, the bully, the mistrustful wiseacre, and the self-assertive superman shove or slink through life without tasting it ; all their contacts are one-sided. When they are very strong they can sometimes seize life and shake it : a man with hooks at the end of his arms can sometimes catch you by the ankle and bring you down, but never can he know the thousand curious thrills of giving a caress or taking the pressure of a hand. Doubtless there are good things in life at which mere force of intellect and character can come ; there are better, subtler at all events, which nothing less than manners will buy. Of these the best is conversation—real conversation—the exchange of sentiments and ideas between people completely disarmed and at their ease, people without fear or suspicion, having no axes to grind, seeking neither to impose nor display themselves, seeking truth by way of pleasure. Conversation is a delight known to the civilized alone.

Of course he will be a man of taste, the highly civilized man, of taste in life. He will discriminate. He will have peculiar wants and particular desires. Civilization, that elaborate protest of individual intelli-

gence and sensibility against the flock instinct, will never accept reach-me-down standards or bow to the authority of shop-walkers. The savage rams and silly sheep are slaves to the gentleman in a frock-coat. Shop-walkers dictate what should be their most intimate and personal decisions. Messrs. Harrod and Selfridge choose their wines and cigars, frocks, shoes, hats, and chemises ; Messrs. Hatchard and Mudie decide what books they shall read ; the Bond Street dealers provide pictures ; Sir Thomas Beecham and Sir Henry Wood music and pills ; Sir Oswald Stoll and Hollywood wit, beauty, and a sense of romance. 'Here, ladies and gentlemen of the British Empire,' shout the emporium kings, 'here is the best.' And the ladies and gentlemen of the British Empire take their places obediently in the queue. Only a few highly civilized venture to inform these decorated purveyors that what they offer happens not to be what they want.

To be civilized a man must have the taste to choose and appreciate, but—let me say it once again—he need not have the power to create. If create he does his creations will bear marks of his civility. But these marks, since they are entirely adventitious

and affect in no way the intrinsic significance of his work, will, though of the greatest importance to historians attempting to discover the character of the age in which they were made or of the artist who made them, be irrelevant to the pure aesthete. If the *Odyssey* be superior to the *Chanson de Roland*, that is not because one has been coloured by a dawning civilization and the other by the twilight of barbarism. Though a civilized artist will make manifest his civility in his art, this manifestation will be no essential part of it. Creativeness is no more an attribute of the civilized man than of the savage ; but discriminating, conscious appreciation is. A man or woman entirely insensitive to all the arts can hardly be deemed civilized.

At any rate, without frequent and violent aesthetic emotions the civilized life runs a risk of becoming empty. The pleasures of that life are mainly contemplative, and of contemplative experiences the aesthetic are perhaps the most important, for, though less intense than the emotions derived from personal relations, they are more certain and more durable. This preference for contemplation (I use the term in its widest sense), which is one of the most endearing

characteristics that civilized people derive from their sense of values, accounts for their dislike of that state of perpetual interference which partial biographers call 'a life of action.' Obviously there are activities which may be means to good, and these a civilized person must always approve and sometimes practise. But since already his life is full of immediate means to good, since there are personal relations to be enjoyed, beauty to be contemplated or created, truth to be sought, he will be generally disinclined to sacrifice this substance to what may prove a shadow. Work for a living he will—if he must; life is a necessary means to good. But existence secured, his dealings with life will be mainly receptive. At its best, the life of action may be an agitated pursuit of what may turn out to be a means to good—good for the actor or more probably for others; but action in itself is worthless, and the state of mind it engenders rarely valuable: at its commonest, action is a stimulant of bad states of mind in the doer, and to everyone else an unmitigated nuisance.

I have admitted that the life of action (and I do not call a life devoted simply to earning one's living 'a life of action'—the agri-

cultural labourer is not 'a man of action') may be a means to good—especially to the good of others. Real men and women of action, however, do not as a rule make wars and massacres, do not domineer over the weak and provoke the strong, meddle with their neighbours and turn the world upside down from altruistic motives. These things they do because only in doing can they assert themselves. What is called a man or woman of action is almost always a deformed and deficient artist who yearns to express himself or herself but, unable to express by creating, must assert by interfering. Such people are our misfortune, and there are a good many of them. They cannot find satisfaction in love, friendship, conversation, the creation or contemplation of beauty, the pursuit of truth and knowledge, the gratification of their senses, or in quietly earning their daily bread : they must have power, they must impose themselves, they must interfere. They are the makers of nations and empires, and the troublers of peace. They are the saviours of mankind from its better self. They are the pillars of barbarism or, still to follow the biographers, of society. Themselves inapt for civilized pleasures, they will not suffer their

more fortunately endowed neighbours to enjoy them. They must impose their standards and ways of life. Worst of all, they drive the less clear-sighted of the potentially civilized into self-defensive action —into semi-barbarism that is to say.[1] From these pests comes that precious doctrine, the gospel of work : as if work could ever be good in itself. From them come wars, persecution, the inquisition and police regulations. By force they fancy they can impose on others beliefs and sentiments ; and the others are fools enough to believe them. They can and do impose external uniformity and discipline. They organize hostility to whatever is unusual and unpopular—to whatever is distinguished and rare that is to say. They are a small minority no doubt ; but as they have nothing better to do than seek power, and as the majority is stupid and docile, they generally get it.

Let us turn back to the civilized. The civilized man is made not born : he is arti-

[1] The more civilized of the citizens consistently opposed the policy of war and colonial expansion which demagogues forced upon Athens. This forward policy led directly to the deterioration of Athenian civility as well as to her political collapse. Had Alcibiades been content with a life of thought and feeling he would never have set his heart on that fatal Sicilian expedition.

ficial ; he is unnatural. Consciously and deliberately he forms himself with a view to possessing and enjoying the best and subtlest ; and yet in another sense, all sophisticated though he be, he is the least distorted of human beings. He is the least distorted because his reactions are the least biassed. To understand this seeming paradox we must fix our minds on two images : on life, or experience, as an ever-flowing stream, and on that strange conduit through which we make it flow, which is personality. The odd thing about personality is that it at once conditions and is conditioned by experience. No two personalities in their original shape are identical ; but during the first years of every human being's existence his personality—the thing I mean through which the stream of experience passes—is twisted and modified by circumstance and education. Here it is bunged up and given a bulge by the *débris* of superstition or the accumulations of habit, there bent and dent by traditional prejudices ; and sometimes by culture it is deliberately refashioned. That it may appreciate the exact force, temperature, and quality of the stream passing over it, that it may register the eddies and react to the

backwash, that it may distinguish surely between drought and spate even, this delicate instrument must be kept scrupulously clean. Incessantly our experience-conductor needs scouring ; and only reason can perform that radical operation. For ever challenging accepted beliefs and instinctive reactions, reason alone keeps personality clear of fixed ideas and foregone responses. The personality of a savage is foul with superstitious prejudices and terrors ; that of a civilized man is not assuredly the personality with which he was born, since it has been battered by fate and shaped by education, but it is clean. No hard-dying taboos, baseless conventions or useless fears come between him and life. Wherefore he stands a chance of one day experiencing something directly, completely, and personally, not as a Christian or a Devil-worshipper, not as an English gentleman or a newspaper-reading proletarian, but as himself.

Not for love of conformity, nor yet for intellectual and emotional security — the great objects of the herd—does a civilized man tamper with his native characteristics. Only when they stand between him and the understanding and enjoyment of life will he

try to mend them. He will try to cure himself of a violent temper as of a stutter ; he will fight against jealous tendencies as he would against incipient consumption. Barbarous passions bring with them no gift of lasting joy. They are as destructive of happiness as hollow teeth. They make us suffer as the sick and behave as the insane. Intruders between consciousness and reality, twisters of judgment, clouders of vision, them a civilized man will do what he can to be rid of. He will try to expel nature with the pitchfork, education, and so trying will become artificial. Thus, though he will never refuse a pleasure on principle, his habit of analysis and sense of values will often convince him that by following his natural bent he would be sacrificing a superior to an inferior. The taste for inferior pleasures he will eliminate or curtail. Should common greed seem to be blunting his sensibility to thought and feeling, he will control his appetite : a savage will eat and drink till he is sick, a half-civilized man till he is stupid. A civilized man will be trying always to improve on nature, and probably he will succeed. He will stimulate here and eradicate there. He will not accept nature as

she is, and I see no reason why he should. Those who do, those who disapprove of any tampering with the goddess, those who have set their hearts on eliminating all that is unnatural, I advise to get back to the inter-tidal scum as fast as fins, flappers or plain prehensile bellies will carry them.

Such is my picture of the civilized man. Does it strike you as slightly unsympathetic? It was none of my business to make it otherwise. Whether you like it or not, whether leniently you describe my picture as 'sketchy' or curtly dismiss it as 'feeble,' I believe you will agree that the sort of person it is intended to portray is, in fact, the sort of person one calls civilized. He is not the good man nor the natural; he is not the artist, the hero, the saint, nor the philosopher; but he appreciates art, respects truth, and knows how to behave himself. To enjoy life to the full is his end, to enjoy it as a whole and in its subtlest and most recondite details; and to this end his chief means are the powers of thinking and feeling, intensely cultivated. He is a man of taste in all things. His intellectual curiosity is boundless, fearless, and disinterested. He is tolerant, liberal, and unshockable; and if not always affable and urbane,

at least never truculent, suspicious, or overbearing. He chooses his pleasures deliberately, and his choice is limited neither by prejudice nor fear. Because he can distinguish between ends and means he values things for their emotional significance rather than their practical utility. All cant about 'rights,' 'duties' and 'sanctities' blow past him like grit and chaff, annoying without injuring. His sense of values, intelligently handled, is a needle to prick the frothy bubbles of moral indignation. He is critical, self-conscious and, to some extent at any rate, analytical. Inevitably he will be egregious. Conscious of himself as an individual, he will have little sympathy with the unanimities of the flock: but educating his mind, his emotions and his senses, he will elaborate a way of life which he will clear, so far as possible, of obstructive habits and passions. No, he will not be natural.

A single specimen of the civilized human being may exist, I suppose, rather drearily alone, sufficient unto himself, and in himself valuable. But only when a number of civilized human beings come together does the civilized man become civilizing. It is a group of civilized human beings that is

the nucleus of civilization. 'Enfin,' said Voltaire, 'partout la bonne société règle tout.' But it takes more than one to make a society, good or bad. When it exists, *la bonne société*, the civilizing nucleus, reigns, if it can be called reigning, only by faintly colouring its surroundings. Those surroundings—the city, state or age—may be said to have become highly civilized (for surroundings) when an appreciable part of the mass, though barbarous enough when tried by such searching tests as I have been applying to individuals, has yet absorbed a tincture of the precious dye. In lucky ages and in favoured spots it has happened that a considerable part of the population has displayed a liking for fine sights and sounds, has given signs of a stirring of intellectual curiosity, and has manifested impatience with those savage limitations on thought and feeling which keep the majority normally on the confines of bestiality. Cities have been embellished by great artists whose work appears to have been deliberately and consciously preferred to that of bad ones. We assert with confidence that the statue of Miss Cavell could not have been displayed in Periclean Athens or Florence of the Medici. Times have been

when many people began to feel a dislike, at once rational and aesthetic, for lies and ignorance. In the eighteenth century Voltaire laughed right out of public consideration publicists more plausible than Mr. Belloc and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ; and in that age Mr. Valentino himself would have been given a less impressive funeral than Sir Isaac Newton. The Athenians made art the first charge on the exchequer. By the Italians of the Renaissance Raphael was reckoned the greatest of national glories. From such straws one divines the direction of the wind ; and closer examination confirms the impression that there have indeed been communities in which existed a vague but fairly widespread respect for the supreme values and the more comely things of life, and, what is more, a will to ensue them even at the expense of more obvious satisfactions. This was the doing of a group of intensely civilized individuals. The group, acting on the mass, unintentionally and indirectly for the most part, coloured its age. Groups of highly civilized men and women are the disseminators of civility.[1]

[1] A classical instance of civilized people coming together to escape their barbarous surroundings, forming a nucleus and gradually civilizing their age—and at the same time an

example of relevant matter which cannot well be incorporated in the text—is provided by the history of the hôtel Rambouillet. In the early years of the seventeenth century one sees the Rambouillet colouring matter at work. It spreads. The group begets larger groups—its direct descendants—ever increasing in size, importance, and civility, ever extending the stain, till the movement culminates in the high wide-spreading civility of the later eighteenth-century salons.

'C'est vers 1607 (I cite a good authority, Boulenger), que Catherine de Vivonne, marquise de Rambouillet, agée d'une vingtaine d'années, se déclara décidément écœurée par les mœurs et les façons des courtisans du Vert-Galant et "ne voulut plus aller aux assemblées du Louvre. Elle se retira dans sa maison et, comme elle était aimable, fort cultivée, sachant l'espagnol et l'italien, comme elle était riche, comme elle avait tant d'ésprit qu'il suffisait, pour tomber épris d'elle, de passer une après-dîner dans sa ruelle, même sans la voir, assure Mlle de Scudéry, et en un de ces jours d'été où les dames font une nuit artificielle dans leurs chambres pour éviter la grande chaleur": comme avec cela toutes ces passions étaient soumises à la raison; et qu'enfin elle avait, pour *recevoir*, la vocation de certaines personnes de son sexe, son hôtel devint en peu de temps le rendez-vous d'une société choisie de dames, de seigneurs et de gens de lettres.' . . . 'Et l'hôtel de Rambouillet eut d'autres effets excellents. Dans la chambre bleue, on ne demandait aux habitués que d'amuser et de plaire, et c'était là l'originalité. Naguère encore, un gentilhomme se targuait peu de charmer par sa conversation et par ses lettres; ce qu'il souhaitait, c'était de passer pour brave d'abord, ensuite pour puissant, magnifique et capable d'une grande dépense: l'esprit était le cadet de ses soucis. D'ailleurs, avant l'hôtel Rambouillet, on n'avait point idée que la conversation pût être un plaisir si grand qu'on se réunit à seule fin de la prendre . . .' But soon, by reason of the prestige of the Rambouillet group, 'parmi les nobles eux-mêmes, celui qui ne se montra pas suffisament "honnête homme" ou homme du monde cessa d'être goûté.'

According to Lanson the effect of l'hôtel Rambouillet was 'l'organisation de la classe aristocratique en société mondaine.'

But civilization soon makes nonsense of class-prejudices and the bewildered seventeenth century 'vit là (dans la chambre bleue) des duchesses et des bourgeoises et des gens de lettres' (Boulenger). And let no one imagine that the conversation was frivolous: 'L'hôtel de Rambouillet était avant tout un salon littéraire; on s'y communiquait des poésies, des lettres, . . . on y écoutait, on y discutait . . . Ce public d'honnêtes gens et de femmes, connoisseurs en beau français—car on discutait avec passion des problèmes de grammaire, et l'on raffinait sur le style dans la chambre bleue—exerça indubitablement une influence sur la littérature et sur la langue.' Nevertheless—'Hormis son petit cercle (le cercle de l'incomparable Arthénice), ce ne fut que peu à peu, lentement, que la noblesse et la haute bourgeoisie française s'affinèrent.'

## VII

## HOW TO MAKE A CIVILIZATION

Two questions remain. Do we want civilization? Could we have it if we did?

Do we want it? Well, besides the word of allied statesmen, there are reasons for thinking that civilization is desirable. We have the deep-seated conviction of every decent man and woman; for in his heart or hers, every decent person feels that those golden ages, the characters of which I attempted to adumbrate, were golden indeed. We all feel that they are a credit to history. Not but what there are cleverish people who delight in hymning the beauties of barbarism; while even the intelligent are aware of the diseases of civilization and the attractions of savagery. Amongst the most highly civilized you will notice a tendency from time to time to react against their own refinement, and very often you will find a little cult of innocence and animality. Back to the inter-tidal scum, via arts and crafts, gardening and abuse of

Voltaire, is a paradox generally acceptable to civilized people in need of a pill. Nothing more natural than that such should contrive small coteries to regret ingeniously and melodiously even the lost pleasures of ignorance and the beatitude of unattainable imbecility. Nothing less surprising than that these coteries should get a good deal of sympathy, and some financial support, from people who have remained barbarous because they are incapable of becoming anything better. It is desirable, however, that the clever ones, the accredited exponents of palæolithic home-sickness, should be clever enough to recognize that there is all the difference in the world between a pet theory and what one really believes. Sculpture and war-dances, friendliness, brown breasts and bananas notwithstanding, every intelligent person knows in his heart that the life of the savage is what Hobbes said it was. With its imminent supernatural terrors, its material insecurity and lack of variety, to us it would be intolerable. We may be thrilled by romanesque architecture and moved by a revelation of passionate faith, but in our hearts we know that the dark ages were dark. We know that, with their appalling terrors, necessary and unnecessary

pain, lack of fresh ideas, emotional and intellectual inhibitions, and perpetual menace of utter disaster, those dream-like days would have been nightmares to live through. And after the handsome sample of savagery offered us between August 1914 and November 1918, we, nostalgic intellectuals, know that we have returned to the artificial pleasures of a fashionable dinner-party, where we can sit and rail in security against the unheroic quietude of civilized life, with a secret but profound sense of relief.

This unquenchable, though often concealed and sometimes disguised, conviction that civilization is a thing immensely to be desired, is the best reason we can possibly have for supposing that it is desirable. But anyone who requires the sanction of philosophy can have that too. The ethical philosophers will tell him that he ought to desire civilization ; for philosophers seem to be pretty well agreed that the only things good in themselves are certain states of mind amongst which conspicuous stand the states of creation, contemplation, speculation, and being in love. Now assuredly civilization will do nothing to check artistic creation : artists crop up in civilized societies as often

as in savage ; and a highly sophisticated atmosphere, though it may be asphyxiation to one artist, may be the breath of another's life. A glance at history satisfies anyone capable of reading it that between the quantity and quality (though not the superficial character) of an age's artistic output and the degree of its civility no certain relation can be maintained. If civilization is less favourable to the ecstasies of unreasoning faith at least it will not actively discourage them ; it will neither forbid nor persecute ; while those other raptures, the raptures of the saints of science, speculative philosophers, mathematicians, researchers, all sorts of students and thinkers, it promotes—nay, very often, alone makes possible. As for the states of appreciation and contemplation, they are of its essence—as are personal relations. Indeed, it is not denied that the civilized man in search of exquisite pleasure is, and must be, an amateur of exquisite states of mind. Wherefore let the professors of ethics give him their blessing.

But ethical systems are dull at best, and the tendency of professors to confound ethics with conventional morality too often renders them downright disgusting. Fling-

ing out in a rage, we hotly maintain that Sardanapalus was in the right when, in Anchiale, he set up that inscription which caught the eye of Aristobulus ΕΣΘΙΕ ΠΙΝΕ ΠΑΙΖΕ—'Eat, Drink, and . . . Play' (though that is not what παίζε means in the context), 'the rest's not worth a fillip.' Sardanapalus was wrong, however, and the life he recommended would soon become as tedious as the ideal existence of a professional moralist. Intelligent human beings will never long be satisfied with animal pleasures. For them the pleasures of the intellect and emotions come first ; those of the senses, a little in the rear, from a charming background. And that is just the place civilization assigns them.

Why people desire civilization is another question, and one which I am hardly called upon to answer. What impulse draws a certain number of savages from their natural state of superstition and sheepishness towards reflection and individualism, let those say who know that an impulse it must be. I should not be surprised if one day they were to discover that this singular impulse was nothing better than our notorious and discreditable taste for pleasure. At any rate it is possible to see civilization as a con-

sequence of this common desire. For, whether or no you share the opinion of Hobbes that the life of the natural man is nasty, brutish, and short, you will hardly deny that the noblest savage is debarred by fear and ignorance from many of our delights. None of those that derive from the free play of intellect are for him, and few that are born of taste. From his sculpture and textiles he gets pleasure no doubt ; and he has music of sorts : all of which we appreciate too. But try your noble savage with a play by Aristophanes or Shakespeare or Racine, with a Byzantine mosaic or a Poussin, a fugue or a symphony, a subtle argument, a witty conversation or an elaborate flirtation, and you will have to admit, I suppose, that lack of culture does bar him out from pleasures we have acquired the taste to enjoy. According to Mr. MacQueedy, 'the savage never laughs.' I believe Mr. MacQueedy to be wrong ; but I fancy the savage rarely smiles ; he grins. He never raises a shoulder or an eyebrow ; intellectual graces are as meaningless as subtle shades of sentiment to him. His pleasures are limited and motonous. And think for one moment of the necessary and unnecessary pain he endures. For the grand

promoters of pain, the most redoubtable enemies of pleasure, are superstition, ignorance, and uncontrolled passion—the essential characteristics of savagery. It is all very well for some obese and esurient neo-catholic, swelling with beef and beer and hate, to gurgle that he is as happy as he is credulous. He is not genuinely superstitious : he is not superstitious as the savage is. If happy he be, he is happy because he believes genuinely in very little except the efficiency of his own digestion : also, without the security and science of which civilization makes him a present, he would not believe in that long. He does not believe passionately enough to know what superstitious terror is. But the mediæval peasant who was convinced that by following his bent he would walk straight into the everlasting bonfire, and the savage living fearfully under the shadow of the taboo—these know terror and pass great parts of their lives in agony and agitation of spirit. Civilization can rescue them by showing that life is a thing to be enjoyed, and then by showing how to enjoy it ; by putting them—if they have any propensity to the finer pleasures—out of conceit with the beatitude of repletion and the satisfac-

tion of hating in comfort ; by showing them a glorious world of ideas to be explored and emotions to be cultivated. Like Satan, civilization will show a man all the kingdoms of the world—the world of the spirit—in a moment of time, and bid him possess them. Perhaps, after all, that mysterious impulse for which we were in search is the devil—in other lands and ages known by the name of Prometheus.

Be that as it may, I am pretty sure that if anyone capable of understanding the term will put himself on his honour to answer the question—Do I desire civilization ? he will have to admit that he does (but then how many are capable of understanding ?). Also, I know that philosophers will tell him that he ought to desire it. But that the majority ever has desired civilization or ever will desire it, is more than I know. The majority desires pleasure, but the majority cannot take long views ; and civilization is not the obvious road. That was an exceptional savage who took the rabbit home and cooked it. Happily it is none of my business to persuade the majority or forecast the future. But since I have attempted to explain what I take civilization to be ; and since it is an end I do desire ;

I shall permit myself to adumbrate the means. I shall sketch machinery by which people might create civilization if civilization happened to be what people wanted.

A civilized population, as distinct from that nucleus which gives it civility, will consist of men and women a fair proportion of whom adopt a slightly critical attitude to life and possess a rudimentary taste for excellence. Clumsily but consciously it will try to train itself to make the most of such powers of thinking and feeling as it possesses. The Spartans discovered that a whole community, or rather the free part of it, could train itself for war: the Athenians were, so far as we know, the first to train themselves, deliberately, for the appreciation of life. This deliberate and self-conscious training is a peculiarity of civilization; the ensuing enjoyment, the good states of mind that come of it, is the end to which civilization is a means. '*A* means,' I say: for though civilization is the most fecund that we know of, it is not the only means to good. And this most likely means to good that human wit has yet devised is, as we have seen, nothing but the colour given to a community by a small

but potent core of highly civilized individuals. If, therefore, society would civilize itself, it must first discover, then establish, conditions favourable to the production of civilizers.

No one can become highly civilized—and henceforth I use the term 'highly civilized' to distinguish the civilizers from the simply 'civilized' who take colour from them—no one, I say, can become highly civilized without a fair measure of material security. In fact, the *civitas*, or state, came into existence in consequence of a desire for material security. Do not run away, however, with the idea that material security alone can give the least tincture of civilization—think of the well-organized communities of the modern world. But to live a highly civilized life a man must be free from material cares : he must have food, warmth, shelter, elbow-room, leisure, and liberty. So here, at the outset, the eager philanthropist who, touched by my eloquence, has decided to devote his political abilities to the promotion of civilization, will be confronted by an urgent and awkward question : How are the civilizing few to be supplied with the necessary security and leisure save at the expense of the many ?

The answer is that nohow else can they be supplied : their fellows must support them as they have always done. Civilization requires the existence of a leisured class, and a leisured class requires the existence of slaves—of people, I mean, who give some part of their surplus time and energy to the support of others. If you feel that such inequality is intolerable, have the courage to admit that you can dispense with civilization and that equality, not good, is what you want. Complete human equality is compatible only with complete savagery. But before plumping for barbarism let the philanthropist remember that there are such things as willing servants or, if he pleases, people content to make sacrifices for an ideal.

At any rate, to be completely civilized, to experience the most intense and exquisite states of mind, manifestly a man must have security and leisure. He must have enough to eat and drink, and the assurance of it, he must have warmth, shelter, and some elbow-room, all the necessaries and some of the superfluities of life. Also leisure is essential. He must have leisure to educate himself for the enjoyment of the best, and leisure to pursue it. Again he must have liberty : economic liberty

which will put him above the soul-destroying dominion of circumstance and permit him to live how and where he will, and spiritual liberty—liberty to think, to feel, to express and to experiment. He must be free to cultivate his receptivity, and to be putting it always in the way of adventure. To get the best a man must live for the best.

Unluckily, material security, leisure, and liberty all cost money; and ultimately money is to be obtained only by productive labour. Now almost all kinds of money-making are detrimental to the subtler and more intense states of mind, because almost all tire the body and blunt the intellect. The case of artists, of whom the majority would cease altogether to create were they compelled to break stones or add up figures for six or seven hours a day, will serve to illustrate this trusim. Further, a man who is to be educated to make a living cannot well be educated to make the most of life. To put a youth in the way of experiencing the best a liberal and elaborate education to the age of twenty-four or twenty-five is essential; at the end of which the need for leisure remains as great as ever, seeing that only in free and spacious circumstances can delicate and highly-trained sensibilities

survive. How many thousands of barristers, civil servants, and men of business, who left Oxford or Cambridge equipped to relish the best, have become, after thirty years of steady success, incapable of enjoying anything better than a little tipsy lust or sentimental friendship, cheap novels, cheaper pictures, vulgar music, the movies, golf, smoking-room stories, and laying down the law. As for physical labour ; if anyone pretends that after a good day's digging or plumbing, hunting or shooting, he is in a mood to savour the subtler manifestations of the spirit, he is talking nonsense.

And there is more to be said. A combination of security, leisure, and liberty alone can give that sense of ease and that magnanimity lacking which life never attains its finest and fullest development. Generally speaking, those only who never had to earn money know how to spend it ; they alone take it simply for what it is—a means to what they want. If freedom from wearing labour alone can preserve the fine edge of the mind, only independence will give a man courage to use it. Those who have never been obliged to please a master or conciliate a colleague alone retain the power of thinking and feeling with

absolute honesty on all subjects. Only they know how to be perfectly disinterested and detached ; how to pursue an idea without constantly looking to right and left for its practical implications ; how to be remorseless in logic and in passion uncompromising. Will the most intellectual captain of industry be quite abstract in discussing political economy ? Will the sublimest Platonist, should he happen also to be a paid teacher of Greek, judge the case for classical education wholly on its merits ? Even socialists, when they happen also to be ill-paid wage-earners, fail to bring open minds to the very question we are discussing—Is economic equality compatible with the greatest good ? Whereas socialism itself is the invention of leisured-class thinkers by whom mainly it was brought into practical politics.

As a means to good and a means to civility a leisured class is essential ; that is to say, the men and women who are to compose that nucleus from which radiates civilization must have security, leisure, economic freedom, and liberty to think, feel, and experiment. If the community wants civilization it must pay for it. It must support a leisured class as it supports schools

and universities, museums and picture-galleries. This implies inequality — inequality as a means to good. On inequality all civilizations have stood. The Athenians had their slaves : the class that gave Florence her culture was maintained by a voteless proletariat : only the Esquimaux and their like enjoy the blessings of social justice. Because few are born with ability to discover for themselves that world of thought and feeling whence come our choicest pleasures ; because the abilities of these rot untended and run to seed in the open ; because to be civilized society must be permeated and, what is more, continually nourished by the unconscious influence of this civilizing élite ; a leisured class is indispensable. The majority must be told that the world of thought and feeling exists ; must be shown, lying just behind the drab world of practical utility, a world of emotional significance. To point the road is the task of the few. Neither guides nor lecturers these, the highly civilized, will merely live their lives ; and living will be seen to have pleasures and desires, standards and values, an attitude to life, a point of view, different from those of the busy multitude. By living passively they become the

active promoters of good. For when it begins to appear that the few have discovered intense and satisfying delights which have escaped the notice of less inquisitive and less gifted pleasure-seekers, the many will begin to wonder. They will wonder whether there may not be pleasures better than their own. Can art and thought, the play of wit and fancy, and the subtler personal relations really mean more to these odd people than racing, yachting, hunting, football, cinemas, and whisky? One memorable day it will become unmistakably clear that they do; that there are people who could afford the latter and yet pursue the former. That makes one think. Here and there a barbarian grows inquisitive, grows suspicious of those easy, obvious pleasures the superiority of which he had always taken for granted. What if the more hardly won were the better worth having? As on a hot evening in late June the scent of hay will sometimes blow into a suburban slum, the faint fragrance of civility floats across his path. Dimly he surmises that here is good—better at any rate. As he passes across the public square that he has crossed a thousand times he is surprised by an inexplicable sense of well-being, and catches

himself to his shameful amazement staring at a handsome fountain. Anything may happen. A sudden feeling of satisfaction may overcome him when he detects a contradiction in the newspaper which hitherto he had read with uncritical awe. The passionate denunciation, at a street corner, of some foreign government for doing what his own has failed to do may strike him as amusing rather than righteous. The fact that a bishop or a magistrate has declared something or other to be untrue or immoral may, on a sudden, be seen to prove nothing. One day, to his shocked delight, our barbarian will find himself laughing with Boccaccio at the monks.

That only a leisured class will produce a highly civilized and civilizing élite is an opinion supported by what seem to me incontrovertible arguments and borne out by history. In Athens, Florence, and eighteenth-century France the dirty work was done by a proletariat. Philanthropists seem to forget that Athenian culture was slave-supported : but he who would discover the conditions necessary to civilization must have a better memory, must remember that two-thirds—if not three-fourths—of the inhabitants of Attica were

slaves, without forgetting that Alcibiades was an exception. In Athens there were very few rich men. Civilization is not incompatible with socialism : a socialist state that wished to be civilized would support an idle class as a means to good just as it would support schools and laboratories. The only question would be how that class should be chosen. At present it is chosen by inheritance, a grossly extravagant system. There is no reason for supposing that the children of rich parents will be exceptionally intelligent and sensitive ; and, in effect, the proportion of the existing leisured class which could be described as ' highly civilized ' is absurdly small. Modern England maintains a multitude of idlers amongst whom are not enough highly civilized men and women to constitute a civilizing nucleus. Such a system is clearly uneconomical ; and without undue optimism we may suppose that the future could devise some method which would exclude from the leisured class at least two-thirds of those whose names now swell the peerage and whose portraits enliven ' the weeklies.' Without sacrificing anything more precious than Ascot and Cowes I think we might reduce considerably the cost of maintaining a leaven of

idlers. Here it is none of my business to contrive the means : projects will be in the minds of all. There is something to be said for competitive examination. Each year the top boys and girls in the state schools might be promoted to the state-supported leisured class. Or, if you think it important—as I do rather—to begin the career of optimate at birth, choose by lot. Take every two-thousandth baby and make him or her a member, and you will get almost certainly a better result than you get from the present system. Remember, too, it is not necessary that all your idlers should be of the élite ; it is necessary only that an adequate proportion should be. Some wasters you will get by any method. That does not matter. You will keep the number as low as you can without jeopardizing the essential, which is that there should be a class of men and women of whom nothing is required—not even to justify their existence ; for, in the eyes of most of their contemporaries, many of the greatest benefactors of humanity, most of the great artists and thinkers, most, no doubt, of the nameless civilizers, have not justified theirs. Generally, their age could not appreciate their services ; and only the existence of a

leisured class, to which they belonged or in which they found patrons, made it possible for them to exist. Wherefore the existence of a leisured class, absolutely independent and without obligations, is the prime condition, not of civilization only, but of any sort of decent society. Not under compulsion, nor yet from a sense of duty, will the most valuable and difficult things be done. But create a class of which you ask nothing, and be sure that from it will come those who give most.

Do not mistake a crowd of big wage-earners for a leisured class. Men who earn several thousand pounds a year by their trade, profession, or calling are generally nothing better than overpaid helots. Of course there are exceptions ; but by the nature of their lives these as a rule are rendered as incapable of becoming completely civilized as is any manual labourer by the nature of his : indeed, when he happens to be what is called ' a captain of industry,' or ' a great employer of labour,' the master is worse placed than the man. For the employer of labour, the great industrial, and the small, too, for that matter, tends to acquire a taste for power, a belief in success as the criterion of value, and a

sense of the importance of his own undertakings, which unfits him peculiarly for clear thinking and fine feeling. It is a pretty comment on modern political thought that taxation should discriminate between earned and unearned income in favour of the former. The man who makes his money uses it generally as a means to more, as a means to power, consideration, ostentation, animal pleasures and barbarous amusements ; it is amongst the receivers of unearned income that you must seek that leisured class which uses money as a means to good. The man who earns tends to grow hard, unsympathetic, narrow, impenetrable ; he holds ferociously what he has and seeks ever to increase his store : it is from men of leisure have come most of our liberal, socialistic, and anarchical theories, to say nothing of that scepticism as to any individual's right to property or power which is nowadays a characteristic of culture almost. Seldom is earned income of much use to anyone but its owner—as mere capital it would be just as useful in the hands of the State ; but of unearned income a fair part has ever been devoted to supporting those who by their unremunerative labours confer the highest benefits on

mankind. That the basic principle of taxation should be the squeezing out of the leisured class for the benefit of great and small wage-earners is typical of a half-civilized age.

In a famous essay Renan points out with his usual persuasive reasonableness that the proper function of a leisured class is to stand aside from affairs and devote itself to maintaining standards by sacrificing the useful to the comely, and preserving in honour the fine and difficult things of life. A leisured class, bred to a tradition of independence, is in his opinion the *sine qua non* of civility. So far, naturally, I agree : where he seems to me to be on less sure ground is in his deduction, implied rather than stated, that the leisured class, if it is to exist, must rule. I see no necessity. On the contrary, it seems to me difficult, if not impossible, for anyone immediately and deeply concerned with the exercise of power to be completely civilized. Is not a ruling leisured class a contradiction in terms ? What Renan had in mind was, I suspect, an aristocracy divided into two parts : a leisured class and a ruling, brought up in the same traditions and intermingling at every point. Certainly this is a possible

way to civilization, providing as it does for a leisured class and a ruling class in sympathy with it ; and on this system France was organized during the hundred and thirty years of her supreme civility—albeit Louis XIV. drew the bulk of his administrators from a class that was not technically noble. An aristocracy may easily be divided into an active class (the *cracy*) and a contemplative. The latter will provide civilization ; the former government ; but it has yet to be proved—I express no opinion one way or the other—that active aristocrats make the best rulers. Clearly it is desirable that the civilizing élite should have no say whatever in the government, since the exercise of power, as we have seen, is likely to play havoc with a man's finer abilities. On the other hand, there is a danger, which Renan foresaw, that, unless the rulers have traditions, beliefs, sympathies, and material interests in common with the civilizers, human jealousy and stupidity, inflamed by a public and expensive recognition of human inequality, will, by refusing to maintain the leisured class, allow society to slip back into pantisocratic savagery. The question does arise therefore—What form of government will be most favourable to civilization ?

It is a question almost impossible to answer.

Any form of government may be favourable provided it supply a sufficiency of children with the most thorough and liberal education wit can devise or money buy, provided it support these throughout life with an income adequate to their cultivated wants, provided above all it ask nothing of them. The notion that what are called 'free institutions' are necessary to civilization is contradicted by reason and history. To say nothing of the East—of China and Persia, of which we agreed to say nothing—we know that the civilization of the Renaissance was fostered and brought to flower in the age of the tyrants. For, as Burckhardt, writing of the Italian tyrants, sensibly observes, 'political impotence does not hinder the different tendencies and manifestations of private life from thriving in fullest vigour and variety.'[1] But even after the government—whatever it may be—has decided to maintain a leisured class, still it will have to count and distribute the cost. On precisely what sum a man or woman can support his or her civility it is impossible to say, because the figure will

[1] Burckhardt, *Renaissance*, i. 184.

vary with varying conditions. In present circumstances I do not think one could do with less than seven or eight hundred a year, the State, of course, making itself responsible for children. Likewise, it is impossible to say what proportion of the population must be highly civilized to civilize moderately the rest. All one knows is that in England the proportion is inadequate. This seems to require explanation : the amount of unearned income in the country is vast, and the number of recipients considerable. One reason may be that a great many of those who draw unearned income and should therefore belong to the civilizing, leisured class prefer to increase their incomes by producing, and thus remain half-civilized at best ; another, that too much unearned income is stuffed into a few pockets. Two obvious and practical measures for the promotion of British culture would be : a law to compel the rich to be idle ; another to abolish that barbarous anomaly, the individual with more than three thousand a year.

This may be good political advice, it does not I fear bring us much nearer an answer to our question—What form of government would be most favourable to civilization ?

To answer that confidently we should have first to ask another, a psychological, question : Human envy and suspicion being what they are, is it conceivable that men should ever support freely, with eyes wide open, for their own spiritual good, but to their material detriment, a privileged group of apparently idle, happy, highly civilized people ? Only politicians and police-court magistrates can tell for certain of what human nature is or is not capable ; and to them I gladly leave the task. Only this I know : unless men are capable of such enlightened generosity, democracy and civilization are incompatible.

There never has been a civilized democracy, but then until the twentieth century there never was a democracy. In the so-called democracies of Greece and Italy it was a small privileged class that exercised power. Nevertheless, because throughout the nineteenth century there was a steady movement towards democracy—though not till the twentieth did the whole adult population of any country obtain so much political power as a vote may be supposed to confer—had I written this essay immediately after it was sketched—twenty years ago—I should have said that to discuss the prospects of civiliza-

tion under any form of government other than democracy was an academic, though perhaps not unprofitable, exercise. The war has changed all that. The war, with its attendant catastrophes, has revealed the, to my generation, startling, fact that military despotism is not only a still possible, but, during the next fifty years, a probable form of government. The war has reminded us that the true source of power remains what it ever has been : not the will of the people, but a perfectly armed and disciplined body of men which can be trusted to execute unquestioningly the orders of its officers. Of this fact, in comfortable periods, such as the later nineteenth century, one tends to lose sight, because in such periods a situation rarely arises in which men are determined to have their way, and all their way, at any price. Between what A wants and B would prefer there is in quiet times room for an infinitude of adjustments and compromises. But the beauty of the great war, as expounded by allied statesmen, was that compromise was out of the question. Wherefore I think allied statesmen should be less surprised than they appear to be when they find that a good many people have come to perceive that, if you want to

impose your will—your whole will—on others, the way to do it is to make those others realize that the only alternative to unconditional obedience is torture and death. The war brought home to everyone what to political philosophers has been known always, that the last arguments are fear and force. Those who command most force and can most thoroughly frighten the rest can always, if they wish to, rule.

Under the Military Service Acts we saw men in thousands taken from their homes, their work, their amusements, and driven to a life they detested to be followed shortly by a death they feared. They entered the Army for precisely the same reason that sheep enter the slaughter-house. They obeyed because they were afraid to disobey. It was the same in all belligerent countries where conscription obtained. Never have I met a man compelled to join the army during the last two years of the war who would not admit that his sole reason for fighting was that he was afraid not to fight. By 1917, at any rate, the issues at stake meant nothing to the ordinary conscript. If, instead of being told to march against the enemy, he had been told to march into the flames of Moloch's sacred furnace, it had

been all one to him. If in their years and categories these terrorized victims had been called up for the service of the god—as indeed they were—they would have done their bit. Now when a central government, depending frankly on a controlled press courts-martial, and the peculiar horror inspired by the process of trial and execution, has the power to make men do this, it has power to make them do anything—as a number of alert people in Russia, Italy, and elsewhere have been quick to discover.

Not its best friends claim that Bolshevism is based on public opinion and sentiment; and the popularity of Fascism is an open question. Yet the Russian and Italian governments can prohibit strikes and compel recalcitrant operatives to produce, which is more than any democratic government can do. They can do it because MM. Lenin and Mussolini had the audacity to organize pretorian guards and the constancy to make logical use of them. The success with which a few able and resolute men have established, and continue to exercise, despotic power in Russia and Italy must provoke the envy and catch the imagination of less fortunate rulers elsewhere. In one way or another their example

may well be followed all the world over. And I do not know that civilization stands in the long run to lose by the change. In its first stages a revolution is likely to be disastrous, for the small, leisured, civilizing class is generally the first to perish. Naturally such stragglers as survive, acutely conscious of two facts—that they were civilized and that they are ruined—complain bitterly of the barbarism of the new régime. However, in the long run, the experiment may turn out, in the short—for them that is to say—it has turned out lamentably. These broken and disinherited exiles cannot be expected to look at the matter philosophically ; but we who remain more or less intact cannot, if civilized indeed we be, look at it otherwise. And, considering it philosophically, we shall have to admit that there are no good reasons for supposing that the Russian military despotism will develop along lines widely different from those along which other military despotisms have developed. In the long run, a reshuffling of the pack seems the most likely outcome of the revolution. To rule and administer, the head of a state—be he Augustus or Lenin, Mussolini or Napoleon —must gather round him a group of civil

and military chiefs. These have power and desires ; and what they desire will be pretty much what the exiles and executed enjoyed. And since they have power to gratify their desires, gratify them they will : a new class of possessors will arise, from which will arise a leisured class, from which may spring a civilization.

Likely enough the return journey will be made by a shorter route. Few things are more coveted by an upstart government than prestige ; and, except military prowess, nothing confers that mysterious glamour more conspicuously than culture. (Be it noted, in passing, that the cost of running a first-rate culture is as nothing compared with that of half a dozen undistinguished campaigns.) Wherefore one of the earlier preoccupations of most usurped tyrannies is to patronize art and science and encourage the growth of cultivated society. The example of both Napoleons will be present to all minds, and in most there will be some recollection of the Augustan age and its eponymous chief. Such civilization as Rome did achieve, she achieved under the earlier emperors, of whom the most efficient, as a means, was that typical military despot Hadrian. The great conquerors, Cyrus,

Alexander, Charlemagne, Timour, Akbar, appear all to have had a snobbish belief in culture ; and it needed only a short period of gestation for the successors of the prophet and of Genghis Khan to become the Prince Consorts, if not the Medici, of their empires. Certain it is that sweetness and light have often radiated from the courts of tyrants and usurpers ; for though for creative artists rulers can do little directly beyond giving them the benefits of order and security and leaving them alone, for civilization they can do much. They can endow and defend a civilizing class. That is why I think of sending copies of this essay to the Russian 'bosses,' to Signor Mussolini, and to Mr. Winston Churchill.

I have no love for despotism ; in itself it is neither good nor beautiful. But I am surprised at the frivolity of those earnest people who, without a moment's reflection, assume that it cannot be good as a means. If despotism and its correlative slavery are, or at some moment happen to be, the means to the greatest good—to the maximum of good states of mind—I should suppose only bad men would be averse from employing them. In fact what these thoughtless philanthropists are prone to assert is that

no state of affairs can be good, no civilization worthy of the name, which is not based on liberty, justice, democracy, etc. These they make ends in themselves, thereby making themselves ridiculous : for democracy, justice and all that, are valuable only as means. A world that was entirely free or entirely just and nothing more would be as insignificant as a world that was entirely pink or blue. To discredit a civilization it is not enough to show that it is based on slavery and injustice, you must show that liberty and justice would produce something better.

All else being equal, I should prefer a civilization based on liberty and justice : partly because it seems to me the existence of slaves may be damaging to that very élite from which civilization springs ; partly because slaves too deeply degraded become incapable of receiving the least tincture of what the élite has to give. A sensitive and intelligent man cannot fail to be aware of the social conditions in which he lives, and the recognition of the fact that society depends for its existence on unwilling slavery will produce on him one of two effects : a sense of discomfort, or callousness. And it does seem to me that a state

of mental malaise, inducing either a turning away from one important side of life or a hardening of heart, is bound eventually to lower the value of the civilized man as an end and impair his efficiency as a means. In this I know that the best theological opinion is against me. The beatitude of the saints would be incomplete without the felicity which springs from contemplating the sufferings of sinners ; and St. Augustine held that it would be unspeakable wickedness in the elect to pity the damned. My stomach is weaker than the bishop's : indeed, it disturbs my peace of mind to have to scold my cook. Wherefore, to a despotism which secured the existence of a civilized class by organizing slavery, or to a plutocracy which, fearing to jeopardize its own interests, threw over its civilized fellow-shareholders the aegis of a police force, I should prefer a social democracy which maintained the means to civilization of its own accord. But such an enlightened democracy has yet to be heard of.

For all civilizations of which we have heard have been either imposed by the will of a tyrant or maintained by an oligarchy. What is erroneously called ' the Athenian democracy ' was an oligarchy depending for

its means to civilization on slaves. In Attica, the learned compute, out of a population of about half a million, there were not above twenty-two thousand possessing the right to vote or exercise power of any sort : add to these free-born women and children, and you may get as many as a hundred and fifty thousand free Athenians. Of the slaves, who were notoriously less miserable there than elsewhere, a great many were skilled artisans let out for hire by their owners, and many were domestic servants. These seem to have been pretty well used and to have enjoyed some of the benefits of Athenian culture. They went to the theatre ; and if they appreciated that privilege they must have been superior in taste, intelligence, and education to our board-school proletariat. Had the Peloponnesian war been avoided, even had it been ended at the Peace of Nicias, it is probable that these superior slaves would have become more and more like citizens : but we may be sure that slaves they would have remained, if by ' slave ' we mean one who is denied political power and compelled to work for others. Below these skilled and educated servants we find a herd of mere human beasts of

burden. These, in this twentieth century, might surely be replaced by machines.

You see how absurdly ignorant are those would-be cultivated politicians who cite Athens as an example of civilization based on liberty, justice, and democracy. What profitably they might insist on is that, between members of the civilized possessing class — between citizens in fact — existed complete social and political, and almost complete financial, equality. This citizen class has at first sight something the look of that civilized social-democracy of which for so long so many excellent people have been dreaming. Here, living largely on the earnings of others, you have a class a considerable proportion of which lives mainly—not entirely—for things of the mind and the more exquisite pleasures. Amongst them you will find easily your nucleus of disseminators, the high priests and priestesses of culture, and just below a block of citizens so thoroughly imbued with their spirit as to be only just below. It remained to unite in culture the higher slave with this lower citizen class ; and to us of the twentieth century, fortified by the scientific discoveries and inventions of the last two hundred years, the junction seems to require

no improbable leap. What, then, is there to prevent a modern society becoming civilized? The answer comes pat. Athens was possible because most Athenians wished to be civilized. Not only the leisured class, but artisans and operatives too, desired 'the good life.' In England we still have the unearned income to support a huge leisured class; the producers, guided by civilized thinkers, have conquered for themselves a fair measure of security and ease; but of what should be the civilizing minority the majority prefers to barbarize itself by lucrative soul-destroying labour and coarse pleasures, while the artisans and operatives devote their newly acquired means to imitating them.

Always towards Athens the best minds are turning for a ray of hope. Wherefore it is well to remember that Athens was a large oligarchy; that all adult male citizens were politically and socially equal; that amongst citizens there were no paupers and very few rich men; and that women, though they did not vote, were by no means all slaves. The position of women, at Athens in particular, in civilization generally, cannot, when we are considering the means to civilization, go undiscussed:

women being, in more ways than the obvious, means to civility. Truly, the ordinary Athenian housewife was treated very much as though she were a highly respected slave. Naturally, for a housewife is a slave. And in this, as in most matters, the Athenians tried to see things as they are. They faced facts and called upon intellect to deal with them, thus elaborating a civilization in advance of anything that went before or has come after. In contemporary life it is generally admitted that the position of women is not satisfactory. They have the vote ; and they are beginning to discover just what that hard-won boon is worth. They remain at a disadvantage. And there they will remain until they have got the work of mother and housewife put on precisely the same footing as that of mechanic or barrister. For the housewife is a worker ; and the Athenian housewife was recognized as such. She was treated with the respect due to every honest and capable worker ; but she did not, because by the nature of her interests and occupations she could not, belong to the highly civilized and civilizing élite. The Athenians appreciated her importance ; but they also appreciated the importance of the highly civilized woman—

they appreciated her importance as a means to civilization. They knew that without an admixture of the feminine point of view and the feminine reaction, without feminine taste, perception, intuition, wit, subtlety, devotion, perversity, and scepticism, a civilization must be lop-sided and incomplete. And for this feminine ingredient they depended on the *hetairae*. That at least is how I see it. There is a prevalent superstition, diffused I surmise by dons, that life in Athens was something like life in a college or a cloister, that in it women played little or no part. All I can say to these old gentlemen is that they have read their classics partially ; and I would commend to their attention, first the demoded Bekker, then the authorities of whom a list may be culled from his writings. To be sure most modern writers on ancient society do appear to have gone to him for a list, and to have gone no further. Let them pursue their researches ; for these authorities will adumbrate at least the immense part played in the best Athenian society by exquisitely civilized *demi-mondaines*.

The Athenians, I conclude, perceived that, like highly civilized men, highly civilized women must belong to a leisured class.

Wherefore they divided women into two groups : a large active group consisting of those excellent, normal creatures whose predominant passion is for child-rearing and house-management ; and a small idle group composed of women with a taste for civilization. To the latter went, or tended to go, girls of exceptional intelligence and sensibility, born with a liking for independence and the things of the mind. To these the Athenians gave intimacy, adoration, and perhaps no excessive respect. The former, unfit for the highly civilized pleasures which they did not even desire, got what they wanted most—a home, children, authority. They were respected and obeyed ; but they were not adored. Being normal, they had, and it was recognized that they had, interests and ambitions totally different from those of their husbands. They were the wives, mothers, housekeepers, of highly civilized men, but they were not their companions. The highly civilized Athenian gave his passion and intimacy only to highly civilized companions ; and if he happened to have a taste for women there were female companions to whom he could give them. These were the *hetairae*.

For amongst the *hetairae*, though there was, of course, a vast majority of common prostitutes, there was also a minority of cultivated *demi-mondaines* ready to become the companions and mistresses of cultivated Athenians. And when a cultivated Athenian desired feminine society it was to these he turned. As the most intimate community of thought and feeling can hardly exist between a man and woman without love-making, the *hetaira*, as a matter of course, became his mistress. The Athenians were not likely to forget that the most exquisite of human relations is the *liaison*, that the subtlest and most impalpable things of the spirit float from one mind to another most easily on a mixed flood of sense and emotion. But it must not be supposed that, a *liaison* formed, the lover took his mistress out of society. The Athenians, with their taste for company and conversation, would never have tolerated Turkish manners. The *hetairae* were an essential part of life ; and if strictly male dinner-parties were as common at Athens as in London, if the *Symposium* played an inestimable part in shaping and fostering Athenian culture, so, I presume, did the *souper fin*. Now a *souper* cannot be *fin*

without ladies. In exquisite Athenian parties you were likely to find *hetairae*. In male society they mixed freely. How otherwise could they have played their part in flavouring civilization? Amongst them were all the most brilliant, accomplished and learned ladies of Greece: naturally, far from being ashamed of their company, the most eminent men were delighted to meet them.[1]

If the *hetairae* were able to hold their own with the pick of Athenian manhood that was because they were not workers, but lived for pleasure—pleasures of the mind, the emotions and the senses. They were not housewives, and if by accident they became mothers they did not rear their children. Nowadays the most sensitive and intelligent women are between the horns of this dilemma: they must become either wives or old maids. Well-off even,

[1] I once asked a French sculptor why little Toulon was such a deliciously civilized town—incidentally it supports one of the best bookshops in the world—when vast Marseille was so coarse and barbarous. He replied that an important and influential part of the population of Toulon consisted of mistresses, permanent or *de circonstance*, of naval officers, and that French naval officers who—unlike the military—are generally cultivated demand of their mistresses—be they the mere companions of a short leave even—something better than mere physical satisfaction. It is the *hetairae* of Toulon who give that delectable little city its elegance.

a modern woman, blessed with elaborately educated gifts, once she is the mistress of a house and the mother of children, finds it difficult to keep her place in the first flight. Difficult, but not impossible : the thing can be done, for I have seen it done. But the loss of freedom, time, and energy, the cares and schemings in which any modern woman must be involved who bears and rears children and orders a house, will tend generally to blunt the fine edge of her intelligence and sensibility, will indispose so delicate a creature for that prolonged study and serious application which to the highest culture are indispensable. Remark that the great ladies of the Renaissance and the fine ladies of the eighteenth century never dreamed of rearing and educating their babies—Talleyrand never slept under the same roof as his parents : and who that has seen the enchanting promise of girlhood, after four or five years of happy prolific marriage, whittled down to drawing-room culture, but will admit the substantial truth of my melancholy thesis ? What is the alternative ? Spinsterhood. With exceptional luck, aptitude, and physique, a married woman may retain her civility. Can a maid ? The peculiar intelligence and sensibility of

youth fade not less surely than other youthful charms. What is to take their place? If her intellect preserve its point and purity, her understanding shrinks: only her erudition waxes. When I consider that tolerance, receptivity, magnanimity, unshockableness, and taste for, and sympathy with, pleasure, are prime characteristics of civilization, I sometimes wonder whether an old maid is fit for anything less than the kingdom of heaven.

Now an *hetaira* could, if she chose, combine the leisure and irresponsibility of a virgin with the sweetness, sympathy, and experience of a married woman. Had she the gifts and inclination to become highly civilized, there was nothing to prevent her living a life favourable to her ambition. She had a wide choice of delightful lovers, and might be devoted to one or kind to many. She was, if not a queen, at least a favourite, of the best society, enjoying at once the advantages of a *demi-mondaine*, a *femme du monde*, an art-student, and a Newnhamite. Grudgingly, the virtuous Bekker concludes that many were 'distinguished for wit and vivacity,' and 'by their intellect and powers of fascination, rather than by their beauty, exerted an extensive sway

over their age.' They were as much admired in public as adored in private. They flirted with Socrates and his friends, and sat at the feet of Plato and Epicurus. As was to be expected, they were not free from blue-stocking affectations and seem to have been a little too conscious of their superiority. But though great wits and poets have never tired of laughing at 'the blues,' it is to be remarked that they have generally been found amongst their humble servants. Moreover, nearly all the most famous *femmes d'amour* have been bluish. Anyhow, I hope I have made it clear that the cultivated *hetairae* counted, if only by reason of their influence on their lovers and admirers, for something appreciable in Athenian civilization, for in that case I have a fair excuse for this rather long excursus.

If I were tyrant I would abdicate immediately. But had I inherited along with power a taste for doing good, my ambition would be to civilize. As a first step to that end I would establish and endow a leisured class every member of which should have enough and no more : also I would make it impossible for anyone in that class by any means to increase his or her income. To organize

society so that the lower class, the workers, should have leisure and well-being enough to profit by the existence of the idlers would be my next care. For my élite there would be an elaborate education and all the approved means to culture ; for the rest as good an education and as many opportunities of enjoying what education makes possible as my treasury could afford. For means to popular leisure and comfort I should look hopefully in two directions : I should look to invention, which enables one man by minding a machine to render the services of a hundred, and I should look to depopulation. In the matter of labour-saving considerable progress has been made, but the wealth so conquered has not for the most part been taken out in leisure ; mostly it has been devoted to the accumulation of more wealth, to war and armaments, to inferior pleasures (*e.g.* picture-palaces, golf, motor-cars, greyhound-racing, football), and to child-rearing. People will propagate. When science gives them a machine whereby one can do the work of a hundred, the whole hundred, without lowering their standard of living, could afford to have more time to themselves. Instead they beget ninety-nine children to consume the

surplus, and remain precisely where they were, in a state of laborious barbarism that is. I have heard experts assert—but experts will assert anything—that even to-day the wealth of the world, were production intelligently organized, could be produced by half the population, which means that by halving the population everyone could double his wages or income. In my state the surplus of potential wealth over reasonable necessities should be taken half in material well-being—amusements and commodities—and half in leisure : once reduced to the point at which production and leisure made a happy match the population should remain stationary. As it is, each new invention means merely increased production to provide for increased population and a few added comforts ; and so long as invention is paced by procreation no one is going to be much the better for it : civilization, at any rate, will be as far off as ever.[1]

I should give my subjects complete free-

[1] The Athenians, as usual, had the courage to face the facts. They dealt with them by the, to us distasteful, expedient of child-exposure. Thus, at Athens, a rise in the birth-rate was met by a rise in infant mortality. Science has made unnecessary such old-fashioned methods, or would have done so, were scientific knowledge brought within reach of those who need it most.

dom of thought and expression, and the right to make what experiments they chose in their own lives, but complete freedom of action I should not give—action having nothing to do with civilization, which is a matter of states of mind. This would come hard on those luckless barbarians who only in action can express themselves. They will have to be content with making speeches, sitting on committees, and trying to persuade, not compel, us to do as they wish; and of some of them I may be able to make policemen. But in my state born thieves, homicides, and meddlers, budding Napoleons, and hot-blooded exponents of the unwritten law will be taken into custody. Unqualified liberty of action is incompatible with civilization. There are in the world a number of interfering, fanatical, greedy, reckless, brutal people who, given the chance, will behave in such a way as to make life intolerable and civilization impossible. In my state they will not be given the chance. Tolstoy may have conceived a world in which everyone would be so good that he would not wish to interfere with anyone else, a world cleansed of greed and hatred, envy and ambition, in which even if he had them a man would never act on

his evil passions. More probably, Tolstoy believed that there would always be violent, meddlesome, greedy, and envious brutes who would follow instinct down any dirty alley, but held their existence unimportant so long as the others preserved their saintliness unspotted. Saintliness, argued Tolstoy, can be preserved by submitting passively and with a good grace. And so it can, and enormously increased to boot ; but civilization would perish. The tortured and over-driven slave of a savage can be a saint or a stoic, but a perfectly civilized human being never. He lacks the indispensable leisure, security, and opportunities. Wherefore, control of action, which means an efficient police force, will, it seems to me, be necessary everywhere except in a society of angels or of brutes—brutes so convincingly below hope of melioration that it matters not a straw how much they injure and impose on one another.

Now a policeman, I am sorry to say, cannot be a perfectly civilized human being. Those who use authority, like those who create wealth, can be civilized but not completely civilized. They must be of the second order. The mere exercise of power, the coercing of others, will tinge a man with

barbarism. My praetorians, my policemen, my administrators and magistrates, and I myself—if I am to be an efficient ruler, which, however, I decline to be—must be content to be the imperfectly civilized guardians of civility. Fortunately, there are in the world a number of people who appear, not only to enjoy ruling (an all too common taste), but to enjoy ruling well. These also are the instruments of civilization. They had rather rule well than ill ; and if in fact they generally fail that is the result not of malevolence but of stupidity. It should not be impossible for a civilized élite by bringing intelligence and education into fashion partially to remedy this ; and if I were a highly civilized Hindoo that would be my plan. Gladly I should leave to high-minded young Englishmen the dirty work of governing ; but I should try by hook or by crook to make the high-minded young Englishmen a little brighter in their heads.

The perfectly civilized are essentially defenceless. Whatever reason may say, their sensibility will make it for them impossible to strike a blow in cold blood or deliberately to inflict a punishment. Unless their fellow-citizens, or the ruling power whatever it may be, think it worth while to support

and defend them, they cannot exist ; for the moment they begin to defend themselves they lose their perfection. No : I have not forgotten that every Athenian was liable to be called upon for military service. That was the prime cause of the instability of Athenian culture, which deteriorated steadily during the war and might at last have sunk to the Spartan level had not a remnant been saved by the crowning mercy of Aegospotami. And if organizing for defence works havoc on the civility of a state, how much more devastating will be its effects on a thing so sensitive as a highly civilized human being. Socrates made a good soldier : Socrates was a philosopher, besides being Socrates. Horace threw away his shield at Philippi. It is a truism, and is, or was, a popular one, that universal military service destroyed the old German culture. To my mind French civilization has suffered appreciably from the same cause. Does it not stand to reason that a perfectly trained and disciplined soldier cannot be a perfectly civilized human being ? Bayonet practice is enough to blunt his finer edges ; and the habit of giving and obeying orders is unlikely to stimulate the critical faculty. Whoever reads and dis-

likes this paragraph will be ready, I feel sure, with the name of some admired artist who was also a man of action. Let me remind him or her again of something I have called to mind too often already—not all, perhaps not most, great artists have been highly civilized. Homer was not, Dante was not, Michael Angelo was not, what more do you want? And, then, let me quote one who, destined for a life of action, though he never succeeded in eradicating the live stumps of barbarism, did succeed in civilizing himself to a surprising degree, and has left in his '*Vita dell' Autore*' a curious record of the process. 'Non mi potendo assolutamente adattare a quella catena di dipendenze gradate, che si chiama subordinazione; ed è veramente l'anima della disciplina militare: ma non poteva esser l'anima mai d'un futuro poeta tragico.' This was the opinion, based on personal experience, of the pugnacious and tragic poet, Alfieri. It remains for those who dislike to disprove it.

I shall need a police force to protect civilization, not to impose it. Civilization cannot be imposed by force. If it consisted in holding certain opinions it might indeed be rammed down unwilling throats;

but since it consists in an attitude to life, in ways of thinking and feeling, it must be disseminated. He who would civilize his fellows must allow them to discover for themselves that he has got hold of a better way of life : thus have superior civilizations been transmitted almost always. How often have barbarous, pillaging nations set out convinced of their superiority in all respects to the unwarlike race they were about to subjugate and assimilate ? How often has history repeated itself ?

> ' Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes
> Intulit agresti Latio. . . .'

First, the conquering chiefs perceive that the conquered possess secrets unknown to them for converting what appears to be insignificant experience into intense delight. Soon, impressed and seduced by the prestige of a superior culture, the barbarian king begins to depend for amusement, and before long for counsel, on the women and men of the ' inferior ' race. Presently to these, by reason of their superior understanding and knowledge, go places of trust, honour, and profit ; till at last the king himself is half civilized, and along with him are converted the more intelligent of those who came

with him as captains and vassals-in-chief. This is the moment for the less intelligent to begin to grumble, to grow seditious, to organize a reactionary opposition. But by this time, with luck, the king and those of his chiefs who have been influenced by their conquered betters will, in their turn, have educated a sufficiency of the horde that followed them to be a match for the fine old defenders of traditional beastliness. And thus the leaven works : conquering Mongols are partially civilized by conquered Chinese and Persians ; a like good fate befell the Arab hosts in Persia, India, and Egypt ; the earliest Median invaders were civilized in Mesopotamia ; and throughout the first century we can watch the struggle at Rome between *simplicitas romana* and the refinements of the conquered East. There the Catos and Tiberiuses were never properly brought to book by the Ovids and Julias ; yet in the second century we do find something more like a civilization than anything that could have been expected to emerge so soon from the dark barbarism of the appalling republic. The leaders of those peoples even who penetrated and finally populated the empire made their effort—too feeble and too late—to profit

by the superior culture of the Roman provincials. They failed, chiefly because the provincials were neither civilized nor numerous enough for the task : wherefore the barbarians acquired only such gaudy tags of culture as bedeck the pathetic courts of Charlemagne and the Othos. Had they become truly civilized they might have spared Europe the dark ages.

Though the means to civilization be established, though a benevolent government maintain a leisured and cultivated class, guarantee security, grant liberty of self-expression in art, thought, and life, promote education and control action, one thing still is needful to call civilization into existence. There must be the will. This will to civilization may be nothing more than the desire for pleasure refined and intellectualized. To suppose that it is firmly planted and ever operative in human nature would be absurd ; but not more absurd than to suppose that it has never existed. If the will to civilization never existed, how has civilization come to exist ? By luck ? Have men climbed out of savage anarchy into some sort of order by luck ? Why climb ? If states of quasi-civilization abound, if there have been high civilities,

is it not a little absurd to attribute the whole process, the vast, the painful effort implied, to chance? On the other hand: seeing that in some places civilization has made no headway at all, that in others it has pushed its nose above the slough only to sink again, that in many after making some way it has lacked strength to maintain itself, and that very rarely has the impulse been strong and continuous enough to raise a society within measurable distance of a conceivable and modest ideal, it would be as absurd to suppose that this will to civilization was something uniform, permanent, and fundamental in human nature. There are numerous reasons for disbelieving in continuous progress; there are as many for thinking that the present level of what are popularly called civilized societies is well below high-water mark; there is none for supposing that society will or will not again touch that mark or surpass it. All we can be sure of is that men, desirous always of pleasure, sometimes go on to desire intelligently, that sometimes they conceive pleasures rarer, remoter, subtler than those to which instinct leads, and that sometimes they attain them. Obviously, civilization was not the goal of that savage who took

the rabbit home and cooked it. Only he conceived and desired a pleasure subtler and less immediate than that of eating it raw. So conceiving and desiring men may come at last to civility.

A will to civilization has existed, has never ceased to exist perhaps. But certainly from place to place and time to time it has varied beyond measure in vigour and efficiency. Theoretically this will should go hand in hand with that will to good which, according to some philosophers, exists always and has existed everywhere. Unluckily it is so difficult to distinguish between ends and means that practical moralists are always mistaking indirect and obsolete means to good for good itself ; and thus the will to good, not only does not aid always, but sometimes positively counters, the will to civilization. The virtuous will too often concentrates its energies on what was once a remote means, and in so doing combats the mediate and immediate. At a moment in the history of any society a form of government, a religion, or a moral code may be a means to good and to civilization ; but long after it has served its purpose, long after it has become no better than an impediment, good people will still be devoting

their lives to its maintenance. The Protestant Reformation, in so far as it was a means to clearing away a mass of superstition, was doubtless in Northern Europe a means to good : but this means, exalted to an end, at last became Puritanism—a concentration on certain theological and ethical fads—and in England has perhaps done more than anything else to hamper and sufflaminate the will to civilization. Puritans, for all their good intentions, are the enemies of good, because they make it more difficult than it need be for themselves and everyone else to enjoy good states of mind. They attach to what were once means to good an importance due only to the end, and on these obsolete means insist often to the detriment of means more hopeful because more appropriate. Thus continence, which in an age of extreme brutality and armed foraging, when to ride was to rape, may have been a virtue, is still in this twentieth century insisted on as a means to good, capable of outweighing the benefits of popular birth-control clinics. Not until they have acquired a sense of values, and then only in an atmosphere of mental detachment, can men hope to distinguish between ends and means or between direct means

and remote. The indirect vary from age to age and from country to country, their value is limited and temporary, their applicability local. Until benevolent people have grasped this truth a considerable part of their moral energies must go to promoting means which are contrary to their ends. Their will to good will become ill-will to that more direct means which is civilization.

In England there is abundance of moral energy which I am willing to consider no worse than a perverted will to good. But is there a will to civilization? A sufficiency of unearned income supports numerous idlers, but the income is ill spent and the idlers are uneducated. Wherefore in contemporary England, though some thousands I doubt not are as highly civilized as any that ever lived, the group is too small to form that operative nucleus which converts a passive culture into a civilizing force. And the few grow less. The spirit of the age is against them, against them the gospel of work and the notion that men came into the world to make money, play games, go to picture-palaces and race-meetings, drive cars, and beget children. This is the creed of the producers. Those who hold it have no use for economically unproductive work

and subtle, difficult pleasures. Those who hold it have no will to civilization. But they have power.

The government of England is based on a precarious alliance between great wage-earners and small. It is plutocracy tempered by trade-unionism. In politics the plutocrats have slightly the better of it at present ; and in life they call the tune. What that tune is anyone who studies the daily and weekly illustrated papers knows only too well. It is what the people want ; also, it is what they call civilization. It is what they fought for to please the plutocrats, and what they may fight for again to please themselves. For this jolly alliance of great and small money-makers is precarious. The small will always be breaking the tenth commandment : hence this incessant talk of revolution. And the odd thing is there are always philanthropic optimists who of such a revolution expect some good. Positively they upbraid me, because I am disinclined to let go such good as I possess in the hope of getting what they think may be a means to better. ' If only,' they assure me, ' the people were to come by their own, all your dreams of civilization would come true in a moment.

The people, you must know, have always loved the good and the beautiful—the highest when they see it : here lies the road you seek.'

If, so adjured, I have not yet abandoned the study for the tub, that is because I have not yet noticed that the soon-to-be sovran proletariat, the working men of old England, manifest any burning desire to avail themselves of such means to civilization as they already dispose of. Rather it appears to me their ambitions tend elsewhither. Far from discovering amongst them any will to civilization I am led to suspect that the British working man likes his barbarism well enough. Only he would like a little more of it. He has so little fault to find with the profiteer's paradise that he would like it for his own. His notion of a glorious revolution is not the reshaping of life to bring it nearer the ideal, but a slipping into some rich man's shoes. The fact is, wage-earners and capitalists agree very well on all questions save that of the division of spoils. The revolutionary coal-miner conceives no better life than that of the reactionary owner ; rum and milk before breakfast, and breakfast of four courses, a day spent in pursuing and killing, or in some bloodless pastime,

champagne at dinner, and long cigars after, an evening at the movies or music-hall, with an occasional reading of Miss Corelli and Michael Arlen, *The Mirror*, *John Bull*, or *The Strand Magazine*, and all the time a firm theoretical belief in the sanctity of the marriage-tie and a genuine detestation of foreigners, artists, and high-brows. That is a life that would suit Bill Jones just as well as it suits Lord Maidenhead. It is the life he admires and understands : which not unnaturally, therefore, he desires for himself. And that is why he is revolutionary. One appreciates his position ; one quite sees that he would willingly change places with his lordship. Also, one sees no reason why he should not. Also, one sees no reason why he should. Above all, one sees no reason why he should expect sympathy and admiration from anyone who stands in for no share of the swag in what he loves to hear called his ' fight for freedom and justice.' The pull-devil-pull-baker between Jones and his master for the plums of barbarism is their affair entirely. No impersonal issue is at stake to agitate those who stand outside the ring. Who gets the cars and the cock-tails is a matter of complete indifference to anyone who cares for civilization and things

of that sort. The trade-unionist is as good as the profiteer ; and the profiteer is as good as the trade-unionist. Both are silly, vulgar, good-natured, sentimental, greedy and insensitive ; and as both are very well pleased to be what they are neither is likely to become anything better. A will to civilization may exist amongst the Veddahs of Ceylon or the Megé of the Gold Coast, but no sign of it appears on the Stock Exchange or in the Trade-Union Congress.

THE END

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